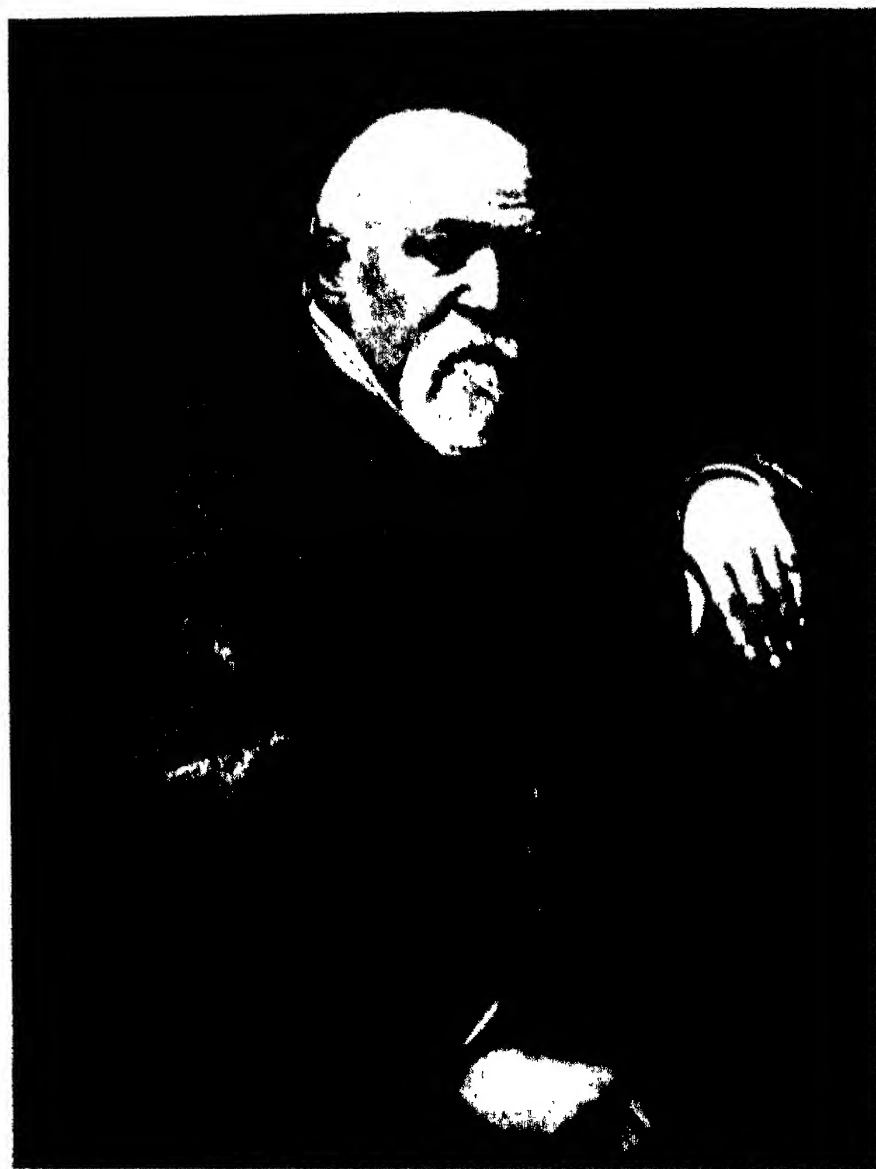






ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS  
CENTENARY EDITION  
IN TEN VOLUMES  
VOLUME X



*Robert Browning*  
(aged 77)

*From an unpublished photograph by W. H. Jones, 1882,  
in the possession of Mr George A. Smith*



# THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY  
SIR F. G. KENYON, K.C.B., D.LITT.

VOLUME X—JOCOSERIA—  
FERISHTAH'S FANCIES—PAR-  
LEYINGS WITH CERTAIN  
PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN  
THEIR DAY—ASOLANDO



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# INTRODUCTION

## JOCOSERIA

AFTER the second series of *Dramatic Idyls*, an interval of three years elapsed before Browning issued another volume of verse; and when it appeared, it was only a small collection of ten poems, miscellaneous in character, and not claiming any unity either in form or in thought. "It is a collection of things *gravish* and *gayish*—hence the title *Jocoseria*—which is Batavian Latin, I think," said Browning in a letter to Dr. Furnivall on January 9, 1883 (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 12). The volume, which had gone to the printers that day, is there described as containing "eleven pieces in all"; but there is no evidence to show whether this was merely an oversight, or whether one poem was subsequently withdrawn, or whether, as is possible, the sonnets at the end of *Jochanan Hakkadosh* were reckoned separately. The title was a reminiscence of a book with which Browning had been acquainted in early years; for in his note at the end of *Paracelsus* (see vol. ii. p. 169) he refers to "such rubbish as Melander's '*Jocoseria*,'"—a collection of jests and anecdotes published in 1597.

*Jocoseria* was not unsuccessful, since it was reprinted twice; but it does not rank with its author's more important works. It contains two

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charming little lyrics in *Wanting is--What!* and *Never the Time and the Place*, and six anecdotes in verse, of which *Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli* is the most dramatic; but all these are somewhat slight in texture. *Ixion*, with its vigorous statement of one of the eternal problems of man's relations to God, is the most important poem in the volume: for *Jochanan Hakkadosh*, though considerably the longest, is perhaps the least satisfactory of all.

### DONALD

With reference to this poem, Browning, in a letter written shortly after its composition, describes what he calls "an old peculiarity in my mental digestion—a long and obscure process. There comes up unexpectedly some subject for poetry, which has been dormant, and apparently dead, for perhaps dozens of years. A month since I wrote a poem of some two hundred lines about a story I heard more than forty years ago, and never dreamed of trying to repeat, wondering how it had so long escaped me; and so it has been with my best things" (Mrs. Bronson, *Cornhill Magazine*, February 1902, p. 9). According to Mrs. Orr (*Handbook*, p. 322) the story was told to Browning by one who had heard it from its hero, the so-called Donald, himself; but it is also told by Sir Walter Scott (in *The Keepsake* for 1832), as having been heard by himself in early youth from the actor and sufferer, whom he calls Duncan, about twenty years after the event (see

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Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, i. 466). Scott's judgment on the story is much the same as Browning's: "I never could approve of Duncan's conduct towards the deer in a moral point of view."

### SOLOMON AND BALKIS

As has been observed already (vol. iv, p. xxx) Browning had a liking for Jewish literature and tradition, and this volume contains more than one example of it. Balkis is the traditional name assigned to the Queen of Sheba, around whose visit to Solomon a whole body of legends grew up.

### CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI

This is a historical event, which took place on November 10, 1657. Cristina, daughter and successor of Gustavus Adolphus, having abdicated the crown of Sweden in 1654, and having since then visited various parts of Europe, was at that date at Fontainebleau, awaiting an invitation from Louis XIV to proceed to Paris. The Marquis Gian Rinaldi Monaldeschi was her Grand Equerry and confidant,—some said, her lover. Certainly he had been trusted by her with some intimate secrets, whether of love or policy; and in October Cristina had reason to believe that he had betrayed her confidence. The Queen's vengeance was inflicted as described in the poem. She had summoned the Prior of the Maturins to be present; and in the Galerie des Cerfs she

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confronted the unhappy Monaldeschi with the proofs of his perfidy, and handed him over to her guards to kill, after the Prior had shrived him. Browning represents his death as taking place immediately and in her presence; but in fact she had withdrawn, and had rejected repeated entreaties by the priest and the officer commanding the guard that he might be spared, before the murder was actually consummated.

### MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI

This poem is based upon an episode (or supposed episode, for its reality has been disputed) in the life of the brilliant and attractive, but unhappy, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797). The child of a drunken father, and brought up in a wretched home, her talents brought her into some note in literary society. Among her acquaintances was the artist Fuseli, and according to Fuseli's biographer she became devotedly attached to him, in spite of the fact that he was already married. She was a follower of Rousseau, and her views on marriage, which were of a very advanced character, led her into temporary connexions, first with one Gilbert Imlay, and then with William Godwin, whom she married in 1797. Her daughter Mary (whose birth she did not long survive) is well known as the wife of Shelley.

### ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE

A trivial fancy, in which the names have no significance beyond that of generalizing the appli-

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cation of the story by giving the parties the names of the first man and the first women,—Lilith being, according to the Hebrew legend, the first wife of Adam, who left him and became a demon. In Jewish folk-lore, Lilith is a night-monster or vampire.

### IXION

The well-known classical legend of Ixion,—who, having presumed to make love to Hera, the wife of Zeus, was punished by being bound to a wheel which revolved for ever in Tartarus—is made by Browning the vehicle of a denunciation of the belief in an endless vindictive punishment for errors due to the frailty of man's nature, for which he is not responsible,—a frailty which needs loving sympathy and guidance, not everlasting torture. The metre is classical also, being the elegiac couplet, though with a rough rhythm which is Browning's own. This poem alone suffices, with one or two of the lyrics, to redeem the *Jocoseria* volume from insignificance in the record of Browning's work.

### JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

The appearance of Rabbinical legend in this poem is fictitious, though portions of Rabbinical learning are embedded in it. "The whole story is a fiction of my own," said Browning himself, "with just this foundation, that the old Rabbis fancied that *earnest wishing* might add to a valued life" (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 16).

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The Hebrew phrases in the note at the end of the poem are a part of the mystification, the title of the supposed treatise "existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing," being "A collection of many lies," while the "pithy proverb" is the well-known Jewish saying, "From Moses to Moses [*sc.* Moses Maimonides] arose none like Moses."

### NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

A charming lyric, which for its freshness and passion might have been written thirty or forty years earlier. In this volume it makes a pair with the introductory "Wanting is—What?"

### PAMBO

In this final poem Browning once more has recourse to a reminiscence of his early youth; for the story of Pambo is derived from that *Wonders of the Little World* of Nathaniel Wanley, to which he was also indebted for *The Pied Piper*, *The Cardinal and the Dog*, and for details in others of his poems. An earlier authority for it is Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*, iv. 23. In the last stanza Browning has one more fling at his critics, but in a much less exacerbated mood than in *Pacchiarotto*.

### FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Of *Ferishtah's Fancies* very little need be said. It is a group of poems, dealing directly, like *La Saisiaz* and *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*,



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with some of the greatest problems of philosophy and religion. For the study of Browning's personal beliefs, it is of great importance; for there is no attempt made to disguise the fact that the opinions of Ferishtah are Browning's own. For once the form of the dramatic monologue has no dramatic significance. The local colouring is of the slightest. "Do not suppose," wrote Browning just before the publication of the volume, "there is more than a thin disguise of a few Persian names and allusions. There was no such person as Ferishtah, and the stories are all inventions. The Hebrew quotations are put in for a purpose, as a direct acknowledgment that certain doctrines may be found in the Old Book which the Concocters of Novel Schemes of Morality put forth as discoveries of their own" (Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, i. 471). The form actually adopted is due to one of those reminiscences of his early reading which Browning states to have been common with him (see above, p. vi). The poem began with a versification of a fable by Pilpay, which Browning had read as a boy; and it grew into an exposition of the poet's own belief on some of the profoundest problems of life. Philosophical poems can seldom have a lasting life, since each generation requires to have these perennial problems stated in its own way; but for his own generation Browning's statement was helpful and important, while the poetic value of the volume is enhanced by the characteristic and

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often charming lyrics interspersed between its several parts.

The Prologue and Epilogue of *Ferishtah's Fancies* were written during Browning's autumn holiday in 1883, the former in September at Gressoney St. Jean, in the Val d'Aosta, the latter in December, while the guest of Mrs. Bronson in Venice. The other poems must have been written in 1883 and 1884, and the volume was published in November of the latter year. It passed into a second edition within two months, while a third followed later, but without alterations.

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

In the interval between the publication of *Ferishtah's Fancies* and his next volume, Browning lost the nearest and dearest of his male friends, Joseph Milsand. Their acquaintanceship began in Paris, in 1852 (*Letters of E. B. Browning*, ii. 29, 43), and speedily became a warm friendship. In 1863 the reprint of *Sordello* (in the three-volume collected *Poems*) was dedicated to him. In the summers of 1870, 1872 and 1873, they were neighbours at St. Aubin, and it was Milsand who first furnished Browning with the outline of the local tragedy embodied in *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (see vol. vii. p. xiv). Milsand died in September, 1886, and to him (with a curious misprint in the date, MDLXXXVI) Browning dedicated his next volume, published early in the following year.

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This volume was *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*. The seven persons thus distinguished, Bernard de Mandeville, Daniel Bartoli, Christopher Smart, George Bubb Dodington, Francis Furini, Gerard de Lairese, and Charles Avison, include three writers, a politician, two artists, and a musician. They are not, however, a merely fortuitous collection. They are the result of that trick, described by Browning above (p. vi), of mental recurrence to the memories of boyhood ; for all were associated with his early intellectual development. Their works were in his father's library, or they were otherwise associated with his first experiences in art and music (see especially Hall Griffin and Minchin, *Life*, pp. 6-20). Now, at the close of his life, he reverted to these old acquaintances, and drew from them the materials for the last but one in his long list of volumes.

In form these poems show a remarkable departure from Browning's usual practice ; for, whereas his special taste was for the dramatic monologue, a form of art which he certainly developed to a height previously unreachd, in this volume he turns round and speaks to his characters, instead of making them speak for themselves. The metre (except in the prologue and epilogue, and in a few interspersed passages) is a free handling of rhymed decasyllabic verse, the lines not always rhyming in couplets, though that is the predominant combination.

Though the volume as a whole shows some of

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the inevitable decline in poetic power and inspiration, the mind and fancy are as active as ever; while in addition the biographical interest gives it an important position in the record of Browning's mental life.

### APOLLO AND THE FATES

This somewhat burlesque poem is based on the story to which Æschylus refers in the lines noted by Browning at the beginning of the poem (*Eumenides*, ll. 723-4, 727-8, in the usual numbering):

τοιαῦτ' ἔδρασας καὶ Φέριτος ἐν οἴκῳ·  
Μοῖρας ἔπεισας ἀφθίτους θεῖναι βροτοῖς.

· · · · ·  
σύ τοι παλαιὰς διανομὰς καταψήφους  
οἶνῳ παρεπάτησας ἀρχαῖας θεάς.

“So didst thou [Apollo] also in the house of Pheres, when thou did'st persuade the Fates to make mortals undying. . . . Thou did'st bring to nought the dispensation of old time, deceiving with wine the ancient goddesses.” The story is that on which the *Alcestis* of Euripides is founded (see above, *Balaustion's Adventure*, in vol. vii.). The passage from the Homeric *Hymn to Mercury* states that the Fates are three virgin sisters, who tell the truth when they are drunk on honey, but deceive when they are deprived of it:

αἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν θυίωσιν ἰδηδόνιαι μέλι χλωρὸν,  
προφρονέως ἐθέλουσιν ἀληθείην ἀγορεύειν·  
ἣν δ' ἀπονοσφισθῶσι θεῶν ἡδέϊαν ἰδωδῆν,  
ψεύδονται δὴ ἔπειτα δὲ ἀλλήλων δορέϊσσι.

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The prologue has no definite connection with the poems to which it is prefixed ; but this is common with Browning, though usually his prologues and epilogues are much slighter than in the present case.

### BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

Bernard Mandeville, or de Mandeville, achieved a *succès de scandale* by the publication in 1714 of his philosophical treatise, *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*, the main thesis of which was that virtue is not natural to man, but is the invention of astute men, who have persuaded mankind in general to prefer the public interest to their own. Self-love is the one natural passion : "the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride." Honour is an invention of moralists or politicians. It is the evil qualities of men that lead to greatness, and so promote the public weal. Luxury is a vice, and without luxury we should have no trade. This cynical attack on human nature attracted much attention at the time, and was the subject of much controversy, in which Mandeville strenuously defended himself against the charge of immorality. Browning, who had given a copy of the book to his father in 1833, takes the side of Mandeville, and makes him his mouthpiece for an argument against

"A mouth which yesterday  
Was magisterial in antithesis  
To half the truths we hold."

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This "magisterial mouth," or "parlous friend," is obviously Carlyle, whom Browning always regarded with affectionate reverence, and who had died in 1881.

### DANIEL BARTOLI

Daniel Bartoli was the author of a volume of *Simboli*, to which Browning was introduced by his Italian tutor, Angelo Cerutti, who published in 1830 an edition of the work for which Browning and his sister subscribed. Browning frequently carried the book with him, and it was on its fly-leaf that he originally wrote *How They brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix* (see vol. iii. p. xiii), and *Home Thoughts from the Sea*. Bartoli's only connection with the story contained in this poem is that he was much addicted to saint-worship; and Browning therefore summons him to worship the lady whose virtues he proceeds to record. The story is a true one, the lady being Marianne Pajet, and the Duke, Charles IV of Lorraine. Their intended marriage was frustrated, as described, by Louis XIV; and the "fervid youth" who conceived so deep an admiration of her when deserted by her faint-hearted spouse, and who ultimately married her, was the Marquis de Lessay. The story is told by Mrs. Orr in her *Handbook*.

### CHRISTOPHER SMART

The one title to fame of Christopher Smart (1722-1771), otherwise an indifferent poetaster,

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is his *Song to David*, written in a madhouse and published in 1763. Both in thought and style it has a vigour, a freshness, and a dignity wholly unlike the conventional regularity which Smart, at ordinary times, shared with most of the minor poets of the eighteenth century. Browning made acquaintance with him early, in the first instance through the gift from his uncle Reuben of his translation of Horace; and he refers to him (without naming him) in *Paracelsus*, i. 770-774. In later life he was fond of quoting the *Song to David* (see Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 69).

### GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

George Bubb (1691-1762), better known with the added surname of Dodington, which he assumed in 1720, than by the title of Lord Melcombe which he acquired in 1761, has come down to posterity with an unsavoury reputation as the type of the time-serving politician. His *Diary* (published in 1784) was in the library of Browning's father; and in this study Browning uses him as an example of the self-seeker who, being fool as well as knave, is not even successful in his self-seeking. Mrs. Orr (*Handbook*, p. 351) states that the higher and more successful style of political trickery, indicated in the poem in comparison with Dodington's, represents Browning's idea of Disraeli; but she does not give her authority for this belief.

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### FRANCIS FURINI

Of Furini, unlike the other subjects of the *Parleyings*, there is no trace among the reminiscences of Browning's early life. Furini was a Florentine painter of the seventeenth century, of whom a notice is given in the comprehensive work of Filippo Baldinucci (see vol. ix. p. xiii); and besides being an artist he was also a conscientious priest. He was subjected to some blame for his realistic representations of the nude female figure; but he defended himself strenuously against any charge of immorality on that account. The subject was one on which Browning felt strongly. Some five-and-thirty years ago he had written in *Fra Lippo Lippi*, with reference to the painting of flesh:

"If you get simple beauty and nought else  
You get about the best thing God invents" (iv. 110);

and his feelings had recently been stirred by some criticisms made upon a picture painted and exhibited by his son. He therefore takes Furini as his medium for a vindication, not of the permissibility merely, but of the true religiousness of a reverent portrayal of the beauty of the human form. His son's picture is the subject of the concluding lines.

### GERARD DE LAIRESSE

In this poem we are carried back to Browning's youth. Gerard de Lairese was a Belgian painter (with a strong predilection for classical incident)



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and a writer upon art in the latter half of the seventeenth century. His chief work was entitled *The Art of Painting in all its Branches*, first published in 1701. An English translation of it, published in 1738, was in the library of Browning's father, and on the fly-leaf of it Browning himself wrote in 1874: "I read this book more often and with greater delight when I was a child than any other: and still remember the main of it most gratefully for the good I seem to have got from the prints and wonderful text" (Hall Griffin and Minchin, *Life*, p. 9). Now, after a lapse of some sixty-five years, he paid his debt of gratitude in verse. One feature of the book was an imaginary walk in which the painter evokes a series of images and pictures from the objects seen as he passes; and Browning here matches this with the description of another walk (ll. 181-362), which is the most highly coloured passage in the whole of the *Parleyings*. The poem ends with the brilliant little song, "Dance, yellows and whites and reds," which had in 1886 been contributed (with the title, "A Spring Song") to *The New Amphion, being the Book of the Edinburgh University Union Fancy Fair*.

### CHARLES AVISON

In Browning's picture gallery, Charles Avison stands for music as Gerard de Lairese for painting. He was organist at Newcastle from 1736 to 1770, when he died. He composed music, including the "Grand March in C Major,"

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which was a delight of Browning's childish ear, and which forms the text of the present poem. He also published an *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752). The March itself is printed at the end of the poem, and a song of the period of England's struggle for parliamentary freedom is written to go to it.

### FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

As the prologue to the *Parleyings* was a classical fantasia, so the epilogue is a mediæval fantasia; and neither has any connection with the main contents of the volume. Johann Fust is (with Gutenberg) the traditionally accepted inventor of printing from movable types in Europe, though in point of fact he was the capitalist of the invention rather than the craftsman; and in certain German legends he is identified with Dr. Faustus. Browning takes up the story in this form, and turns it into a meditation on the good and evil results which may be expected from his invention. The greater part of the poem is merely a rather grotesque play of fancy; but at the end it turns into serious and impassioned verse.

### ASOLANDO

In his last volume, *Asolando*, Browning was like the good householder, who brings out of his treasure things new and old. Its contents range over a period of forty-seven years, from *The Cardinal and the Dog*, which was written in 1842, to

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the *Prologue*, dated September 6, 1889, which, with other poems, was written during the last visit to Asolo. For the most part, however, there is no reason to doubt that they belong to the last two years of his life; and they show his poetic spirit running freshly and brightly to its close. During those two years, 1888 and 1889, the collected edition of his *Poetical Works* in sixteen volumes, subsequently completed by a seventeenth, was coming out, and part of his time was occupied with the work of revision connected with it. But he was also writing fresh verse. In August, 1889, he, with his sister, visited Asolo for the third and last time. There he corrected the proof sheets of his last volume; there he wrote certainly the *Prologue* and *The Lady and the Painter*; and from his visit there was derived the title of the book. At the beginning of November he moved on to his son's new house in Venice, the Palazzo Rezzonico on the Grand Canal, which will henceforth bear his memorial tablet as long as Italy retains her affection for the English poets who have loved her. Late in the month he caught a chill, which his general strength (in spite of his feeling of health) was in no state to resist; and there, on December 12, the end came. On that very day *Asolando* had been published in London, and the first reviews, based upon the advance copies supplied by the publishers, appeared that morning in the London papers. The news of the favourable reception which they gave to the volume

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was telegraphed out to Venice, and the dying poet was just able to express his satisfaction.

*Asolando* was appropriately dedicated to Mrs. Arthur Bronson, the friend who had frequently been his hostess in Venice, and who had arranged all the details of his last visit to Asolo, where she had herself taken a house. Some of her recollections of Browning are recorded in the *Cornhill Magazine* for February, 1902.

The death of the poet no doubt co-operated with the attractiveness of the poetry (which is of a much simpler character than most of the *Parleyings*) to stimulate the demand for the volume, of which seven reprints were issued in the course of a few weeks, while an eighth and a ninth followed subsequently.

In the Introduction to vol. vii. of this edition (p. viii) it was stated that the original MS. of *Asolando* was retained by Mr. R. Barrett Browning for his life, when he presented the rest of his father's MSS. to Balliol College. It was Mr. R. B. Browning's intention that *Asolando* should follow the rest at his death; but since he omitted to embody his intentions in a will, the ultimate destination of the MS. is for the moment doubtful. Only, apparently, through private generosity could it reach the home designed for it by its author and his son.

## PROLOGUE

The prologue has a special interest as one of Browning's few direct utterances of a part of his

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poetic creed, delivered at the very close of his poetic career. The date attached to it shows that it was written during the last visit to Asolo, within a few days after his arrival there.

### ROSNY

It is on record that *Rosny* was written at the beginning of 1888, and was followed by *Beatrice Signorini* and *Flute Music* (see L. Whiting, *The Brownings, their Life and Art*, p. 267).

### DUBIETY

Though record is wanting, one feels that the "autumn weather" here invoked is that of the last visit to Asolo. In this peaceful reverie, where all sense of conflict and effort is over, and only the memory of the love that gilded earlier days comes back, one would find the appropriate atmosphere for the close of a poet's life.

NOW : HUMILITY : POETICS : SUMMUM BONUM :  
A PEARL, A GIRL : SPECULATIVE : WHITE  
WITCHCRAFT

This group of love-poems makes a curious contrast with the reverie of age which precedes them. There is no direct evidence to prove their date, but in style they resemble the lyrics of the same class in *Jocoseria* and *Ferishtah*. If they had been in existence in 1883, they would probably have been included in the former of these volumes, the contents of which are rather meagre ; hence, in spite of their extraordinary verve and vigour—

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extraordinary in a poet of over seventy years—they probably belong to the last years of the poet's life.

### BAD DREAMS, I-IV

This series of conundrums shows Browning as the poet of puzzles to the last ; and they form an amusing exercise to those who take pleasure in exercises of ingenuity.

### INAPPREHENSIVENESS

A vivid little fancy, evidently of the Asolo period, from the allusion in line 12.

### WHICH ?

The first section of the volume closes with this anecdote, which might be associated with the group of love lyrics noticed above.

### THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG

A group of stories follows ; and the first of them, at least, belongs to a period very far removed from that of the majority of the contents of this volume. *The Cardinal and the Dog* was, in fact, a companion poem to *The Pied Piper*, having been written, like it, to amuse Willie Macready, the actor's son, during an illness. "He had a talent for drawing," wrote Browning to Dr. Furnivall in 1881 (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, i. 76), "and asked me to give him some little thing to illustrate ; so I made a bit of a poem out of an old account of the death

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of the Pope's Legate at the Council of Trent,—which he made such clever drawings for, that I tried at a more picturesque subject, the Piper." Browning derived the story (as he did, in part at least, that of *The Pied Piper*), from Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World*.

### THE POPE AND THE NET : THE BEAN-FEAST

One is inclined to refer these poems to the same period as *The Cardinal and the Dog* ; but direct evidence appears to be lacking.

### MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

This anecdote is historical, and concerns the ancestors of no less a person than Sir Walter Scott. The story is thus told by Lockhart :

“Another striking chapter in the genealogical history belongs to the marriage of Auld Wat's son and heir, afterwards Sir William Scott of Harden, distinguished by the early favour of James VI, and severely fined for his loyalty under the usurpation of Cromwell. The period of this gentleman's youth was a very wild one in that district. The Border clans still made war on each other occasionally, much in the fashion of their forefathers ; and the young and handsome heir of Harden, engaging in a foray upon the lands of Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank, treasurer-depute of Scotland, was overpowered by that baron's retainers, and carried in shackles to his castle, now a heap of ruins, on the banks of the Tweed. Elibank's ‘doom-tree’ extended its broad arms close to the gates of his fortress, and

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the indignant laird was on the point of desiring his prisoner to say a last prayer, when his more considerate dame interposed milder counsels, suggesting that the culprit was born to a good estate, and that they had three unmarried daughters. Young Harden, not, it is said, without hesitation, agreed to save his life by taking the plainest of the three off their hands; and the contract of marriage, executed instantly on the parchment of a drum, is still in the charter-chest of his noble representative."

### ARCADES AMBO

This forms a companion poem to *Tray*, in the first series of *Dramatic Idyls* (vol. ix, p. xx) as the deliverance of Browning's soul against vivisection.

### THE LADY AND THE PAINTER

This is certainly one of Browning's last poems, having been written during the last visit to Asolo. The story of its origin is told by Mrs. Bronson (quoted by Miss L. Whiting, *op. cit.*, p. 287):

"One day on returning from a drive to Bassano the poet was strangely silent, and no one spoke; finally he announced that he had written a poem since they left Bassano. In response to an exclamation of surprise, he said: 'Oh, it's all in my head, but I shall write it out presently.' His hostess asked if he would not even say what inspired it, to which he returned: 'Well, the birds twittering in the trees suggested it. You know I don't like women to wear these things in their bonnets.' The poem in question proved to be *The Lady and the Painter*."



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The poem is thus appropriately placed side by side with *Arcades Ambo*.

### PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

The origin of this poem too is recorded by Mrs. Bronson (*Cornhill Magazine*, February, 1902). It belongs to Browning's last visit but one to Venice, that is to the autumn of 1888, when he was Mrs. Bronson's guest at Ca' Alvisi. He happened to see a book entitled *Curiosità Veneziane*, by Tassini (1863), which contains a number of stories and legends connected with the houses, streets, and bridges of Venice. Among them, the legend of the Ponte dell' Angelo attracted his attention, and, having ascertained from his gondolier that the story was still really current in popular tradition, he subsequently embodied it in this poem. Father Boverio, who is quoted in the last lines of the poem as the authority for it, is the author of the *Annales . . . ordinis minorum S. Francisci qui capucini nuncupantur* (1632-39), to which Browning referred for confirmation of Tassini's record.

### BEATRICE SIGNORINI

Written early in 1888. Like the *Parleying with Francis Furini* and *Filippo Baldinucci on the Privilege of Burial*, the suggestion for this poem was derived from Baldinucci's *Notizie*.

## INTRODUCTION

### FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT

A pleasant trifle, written at about the same time as *Beatrice Signorini*.

“IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST——”

The volume, and with it Browning's work, ends on a more serious note. The last four poems touch, in different ways, on some of the deeper thoughts of human life. There is no evidence to prove their exact date. This, the first of them, put into the mouth of a Roman who has been listening to a panegyric on Augustus, gives a vivid thumb-nail sketch of that pagan world, which the birth even then taking place in Judæa was to transform and supersede so completely.

The poem has some anachronisms; for while the line “Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times” points to a date about contemporary with the Nativity (Augustus' thirteenth consulship was in B.C. 2, according to the traditional chronology),—and this is no doubt the period intended—Virgil, Horace (“little Flaccus”), and Varius had then all been dead for several years. L. Varius Rufus, who died in B.C. 14, was a poet of considerable repute, though his works, one of which was an epic on Augustus, have not survived.

### DEVELOPMENT

This poem is so far autobiographical that the poet's father was a scholar and a book-lover, and that Robert Browning made his first acquaintance

## INTRODUCTION

with Homer through Pope's translation at a very early date. But the application of the poem is not to the Homeric question, but to those vexed problems of Biblical criticism which were so rife during the later years of the poet's life.

### REPHAN

This striking poem, like so many others which have been noted above, is due to a recollection of a story read in very early years, namely "How it strikes a Stranger," which forms part of the contents of *The Contributions of Q. Q.*, by Jane Taylor. The authoress, who died in 1824, was well known as the writer of poems for children, notably her *Hymns for Infant Minds*. The "star of my God Rephan" comes, of course, from Acts vii. 43.

### REVERIE

It is striking—and pleasant—to find that in this poem, written in all probability in the last years of the poet's life, the old antithesis of Power and Love, so prominent in poems nearly half a century earlier, is once more stated as the central point of his faith. It is the antithesis which appears in *Saul*, in *Christmas Eve*, in the *Epistle of Karshish*, in *A Death in the Desert*, in *The Pope*, repeated again and again at intervals as the cardinal belief in the poet's philosophy. *Reverie* restates it once more, and sums it up in two stanzas at the end, which are worthy to take their place with *Rabbi Ben Ezra* as a summary of Browning's creed.

# INTRODUCTION

## EPILOGUE

It would be interesting to know the precise date of this poem,—this final and summary expression of the courage and hopefulness which were so characteristic of Browning's outlook upon life and humanity. The faith confessed in these lines was his throughout his life ; but there is no reason to doubt that this utterance of it belongs to his last years. In any case he chose it deliberately to be the epilogue to a volume which he must have known would be at least one of his latest deliverances ; and it falls as appropriately into its place as Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar*.

An incident connected with this poem deserves to remain on record. It is a reminiscence of the South African war, told by Miss Violet Brooke-Hunt in a letter to the *Spectator* (October 25, 1902) :

“On one occasion [at a lecture or concert] I quoted the lines from Browning's Epilogue commencing :

‘One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward.’

I was promptly asked to say it over again slowly ; pencils and odd scraps of paper were produced, and all over the tent I saw laborious efforts being made to scribble down the verse. The audience included Yeomanry, C.I.V.'s, gunners, sappers, and men from three or four line battalions. I suggested that it would be better to wait until the close of the evening, when those who wished for the verse could stay behind, and I would dictate

## INTRODUCTION

it as slowly as they wished. When the time came, more than three hundred men kept their places, and carried away the words pencilled inside pocket Testaments, note-books, on the backs of envelopes, or on any piece of paper that could be raised. 'Mind you give us a fresh one next time, Miss,' remarked a private in a Lancashire regiment. 'Words like that stick in a fellow's head, and come to his mind more than once or twice, I can tell you.' "

On no other note would one wish the collected work of Robert Browning, true poet, true helper of his generation, true glory of the literature of England, to conclude.



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## PORTRAIT

### ROBERT BROWNING (AGED 77)

*From an unpublished photograph by W. H. Grove (1889) in the possession of Mrs. George M. Smith . . .* FRONTISPIECE



# JOCOSERIA

VOL. X

A

# JOCOSERIA

1883

WANTING is—what ?  
Summer redundant,  
Blueness abundant,  
—Where is the blot ?

Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,  
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame :  
What of the leafage, what of the flower ?  
Roses embowering with nought they embower !  
Come then, complete incompleteness, O come,  
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer !  
    Breathe but one breath  
    Rose-beauty above,  
    And all that was death  
    Grows life, grows love,  
        Grows love !



## DONALD

“Will you hear my story also,  
—Huge Sport, brave adventure in plenty?”  
The boys were a band from Oxford,  
The oldest of whom was twenty.

The bothy we held carouse in 5  
Was bright with fire and candle;  
Tale followed tale like a merry-go-round  
Whereof Sport turned the handle.

In our eyes and noses—turf-smoke : 10  
In our ears a tune from the trivet,  
Whence “Boiling, boiling,” the kettle sang,  
“And ready for fresh Glenlivet.”

So, feat capped feat, with a vengeance :  
Truths, though,—the lads were loyal :  
“Grouse, five score brace to the bag ! 15  
Deer, ten hours’ stalk of the Royal !”

Of boasting, not one bit, boys !  
Only there seemed to settle  
Somehow above your curly heads,  
—Plain through the singing kettle, 20

Palpable through the cloud,  
As each new-puffed Havanna  
Rewarded the teller’s well-told tale,—  
This vaunt “To Sport—Hosanna !

## JOCOSERIA

“ Hunt, fish, shoot, 25  
Would a man fulfil life's duty !  
Not to the bodily frame alone  
Does Sport give strength and beauty,

“ But character gains in—courage ?  
Ay, Sir, and much beside it ! 30  
You don't sport, more 's the pity :  
You soon would find, if you tried it,

“ Good sportsman means good fellow,  
Sound-hearted he, to the centre ;  
Your mealy-mouthed mild milksops 35  
—There 's where the rot can enter !

“ There 's where the dirt will breed,  
The shabbiness Sport would banish !  
Oh no, Sir, no ! In your honoured case  
All such objections vanish. 40

“ 'T is known how hard you studied :  
A Double-First—what, the jigger !  
Give me but half your Latin and Greek,  
I 'll never again touch trigger !

“ Still, tastes are tastes, allow me ! 45  
Allow, too, where there 's keenness  
For Sport, there 's little likelihood  
Of a man's displaying meanness ! ”

So, put on my mettle, I interposed.  
“ Will you hear my story ? ” quoth I. 50  
“ Never mind how long since it happened,  
I sat, as we sit, in a bothy ;

## DONALD

“With as merry a band of mates, too,  
Undergrads all on a level :  
(One 's a Bishop, one 's gone to the Bench, 55  
And one 's gone—well, to the Devil.)

“When, lo, a scratching and tapping !  
In hobbled a ghastly visitor.  
Listen to just what he told us himself  
—No need of our playing inquisitor !” 60

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire  
Mount . . . Ben . . . but the name scarce  
matters :

Of the naked fact I am sure enough  
Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognize Ben by description ; 65  
Behind him -a moor's immenseness :  
Up goes the middle mount of a range,  
Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind !  
For an edge there is, though narrow ; 70  
From end to end of the range, a stripe  
Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path  
Saves himself miles of journey  
He has to plod if he crosses the moor 75  
Through heather, peat and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,  
For, look you, right in the middle  
Projects bluff Ben—with an end in *ich*—  
Why planted there, is a riddle : 80



## JOCOSERIA

Since all Ben's brothers little and big  
Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,  
And only this burliest out must bulge  
Till it seems—to the beholder

From down in the gully,—as if Ben's breast 85  
To a sudden spike diminished,  
Would signify to the boldest foot  
“All further passage finished!”

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on  
And on to the very bending, 90  
Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,  
No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt  
Having trod, he, there arriving,  
Finds—what he took for a point was breadth, 95  
A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 't is reached, proves  
straight,  
From one side gains the other :  
The wee path widens—resume the march,  
And he foils you, Ben my brother ! 100

But Donald—(that name, I hope, will do)—  
I wrong him if I call “foiling”  
The tramp of the callant, whistling the while  
As blithe as our kettle 's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood up, 105  
And now,—when perchance was waiting  
A lass at the brig below,—'twixt mount  
And moor would he stand debating?

## DONALD

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,  
A glory of bone and muscle : 110  
Did a fiend dispute the right of way,  
Donald would try a tussle.

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad  
On to the narrow and narrow ;  
A step more, rounding the angular rock, 115  
Reached the front straight as an arrow.

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he stood,  
When—whom found he full-facing ?  
What fellow in courage and wariness too,  
Had scouted ignoble pacing, 120

And left low safety to timid mates,  
And made for the dread dear danger,  
And gained the height where—who could guess  
He would meet with a rival ranger ?

'T was a gold-red stag that stood and stared, 125  
Gigantic and magnific,  
By the wonder—ay, and the peril—struck  
Intelligent and pacific :

For a red deer is no fallow deer  
Grown cowardly through park-feeding ; 130  
He batters you like a thunderbolt  
If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*  
Had valour advised discretion :  
You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a rope 135  
No Blondin makes profession.

## JOCOSERIA

Yet Donald must turn, would pride permit,  
Though pride ill brooks retiring :  
Each eyed each—mute man, motionless beast—  
Less fearing than admiring.

140

These are the moments when quite new sense,  
To meet some need as novel,  
Springs up in the brain : it inspired resource :  
—"Nor advance nor retreat but—grovel !"

And slowly, surely, never a whit  
Relaxing the steady tension  
Of eye-stare which binds man to beast,—  
By an inch and inch declension,

145

Sank Donald sidewise down and down :  
Till flat, breast upwards, lying  
At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,  
—"If he cross me ! The trick 's worth trying."

150

Minutes were an eternity ;  
But a new sense was created  
In the stag's brain too ; he resolves ! Slow, sure,  
With eye-stare unabated,

155

Feelingly he extends a foot  
Which tastes the way ere it touches  
Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,  
Nor hold of the same unclutches

160

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,  
Lands itself no less finely :  
So a mother removes a fly from the face  
Of her babe asleep supinely.

## DONALD

And now 't is the haunch and hind foot's turn      165  
—That 's hard : can the beast quite raise it ?  
Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,  
His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift ! But Donald, you see,  
Was sportsman first, man after :      170  
A fancy lightened his caution through,  
—He well-nigh broke into laughter.

“It were nothing short of a miracle !  
Unrivalled, unexampled—  
All sporting feats with this feat matched      175  
Were down and dead and trampled !”

The last of the legs as tenderly  
Follows the rest : or never  
Or now is the time ! His knife in reach,  
And his right-hand loose—how clever !      180

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,  
While the left-hand grasps the pastern.  
A rise on the elbow, and—now 's the time  
Or never : this turn 's the last turn !

I shall dare to place myself by God      185  
Who scanned—for He does—each feature  
Of the face thrown up in appeal to Him  
By the agonizing creature.

Nay, I hear plain words : “Thy gift brings this !”  
Up he sprang, back he staggered,      190  
Over he fell, and with him our friend  
—At following game no laggard.

## JOCOSERIA

Yet he was not dead when they picked next day  
From the gully's depth the wreck of him ;  
His fall had been stayed by the stag beneath 195  
Who cushioned and saved the neck of him.

But the rest of his body—why, doctors said,  
Whatever could break was broken ;  
Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a toast  
In a tumbler of port-wine soaken. 200

“ That your life is left you, thank the stag ! ”  
Said they when—the slow cure ended—  
They opened the hospital door, and thence  
—Strapped, spliced, main fractures mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone,— 205  
Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,  
Out—what went in a Goliath well-nigh,—  
Some half of a David hobbled.

“ You must ask an alms from house to house :  
Sell the stag's head for a bracket, 210  
With its grand twelve tines—I 'd buy it myself—  
And use the skin for a jacket ! ”

He was wiser, made both head and hide  
His win-penny : hands and knees on,  
Would manage to crawl—poor crab—by the roads 215  
In the misty stalking-season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,  
Why, harvest was sure : folk listened.  
He told his tale to the lovers of Sport :  
Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes glistened. 220

## DONALD

And when he had come to the close, and spread  
His spoils for the gazers' wonder,  
With "Gentlemen, here 's the skull of the stag  
I was over, thank God, not under!"—

The company broke out in applause ; 225  
"By Jingo, a lucky cripple !  
Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of bread,  
And a tug, besides, at our tippie !"

And "There 's my pay for your pluck !" cried This,  
"And mine for your jolly story !" 230  
Cried That, while 'T' other --but he was drunk—  
Hiccapped "A trump, a Tory !"

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest ;  
For, as Homer would say, "within grate  
Though teeth kept tongue," my whole soul  
growled 235  
"Rightly rewarded, --Ingrate !"

## SOLOMON AND BALKIS

SOLOMON King of the Jews and the Queen of  
Sheba Balkis

Talk on the ivory throne, and we well may con-  
jecture their talk is

Solely of things sublime : why else has she sought  
Mount Zion,

Climbed the six golden steps, and sat betwixt lion  
and lion ?

She proves him with hard questions : before she  
has reached the middle

He smiling supplies the end, straight solves them  
riddle by riddle ;

Until, dead-beaten at last, there is left no spirit  
in her,

And thus would she close the game whereof she  
was first beginner :

“ O wisest thou of the wise, world's marvel and  
well-nigh monster,

One crabbed question more to construe or *vulgo*  
conster !

Who are those, of all mankind, a monarch of per-  
fect wisdom

Should open to, when they knock at *spheteron do*  
—that 's his dome ? ”

The King makes tart reply : “ Whom else but the  
wise his equals

Should he welcome with heart and voice ?—since,  
king though he be, such weak walls

## SOLOMON AND BALKIS

Of circumstance—power and pomp—divide souls  
each from other  
That whoso proves kingly in craft I needs must  
acknowledge my brother.

“Come poet, come painter, come sculptor, come  
builder—whate’er his condition,  
Is he prime in his art? We are peers! My in-  
sight has pierced the partition  
And hails—for the poem, the picture, the statue,  
the building—my fellow!  
Gold ’s gold though dim in the dust: court-polish  
soon turns it yellow.

“But tell me in turn, O thou to thy weakling  
sex superior,  
That for knowledge hast travelled so far yet  
seemest no whit the wearier,—  
Who are those, of all mankind, a queen like  
thysel, consummate  
In wisdom, should call to her side with an affable  
‘Up hither, come, mate!’”

“The Good are my mates—how else? Why  
doubt it?” the Queen upbridled:  
“Sure even above the Wise,—or in travel my eyes  
have idled,—  
I see the Good stand plain: be they rich, poor,  
shrewd or simple,  
If Good they only are. . . . Permit me to drop  
my wimple!”

And in that bashful jerk of her body, she—peace,  
thou scoffer!—  
Jostled the King’s right-hand stretched courteously  
help to proffer,



## JOCOSERIA

And so disclosed a portent : all unaware the Prince  
    eyed  
The Ring which bore the Name—turned outside  
    now from inside !

The truth-compelling Name!—and at once “I  
    greet the Wise—Oh,  
Certainly welcome such to my court—with this  
    proviso :  
The building must be my temple, my person stand  
    forth the statue,  
The picture my portrait prove, and the poem my  
    praise—you cat, you !”

But Solomon nonplussed ? Nay ! “Be truthful  
    in turn !” so bade he :  
“See the Name, obey its hest !” And at once  
    subjoins the lady  
—“Provided the Good are the young, men strong  
    and tall and proper,  
Such servants I straightway enlist,—which means  
    . . .” but the blushes stop her.

“Ah, Soul,” the Monarch sighed, “that wouldst  
    soar yet ever crawlest,  
How comes it thou canst discern the greatest yet  
    choose the smallest,  
Unless because heaven is far, where wings find fit  
    expansion,  
While creeping on all-fours suits, suffices the  
    earthly mansion ?

“Aspire to the Best ! But which ? There are  
    Bests and Bests so many,  
With a *habitat* each for each, earth's Best as much  
    Best as any !

## SOLOMON AND BALKIS

On Lebanon roots the cedar—soil lofty, yet stony  
and sandy—

While hyssop, of worth in its way, on the wall  
grows low but handy.

“Above may the Soul spread wing, spurn body  
and sense beneath her;

Below she must condescend to plodding unbuoyed  
by æther.

In heaven I yearn for knowledge, account all else  
inanity;

On earth I confess an itch for the praise of fools—  
that 's Vanity.

“It is nought, it will go, it can never presume  
above to trouble me;

But here,—why, it toys and tickles and teases,  
howe'er I redouble me

In a doggedest of endeavours to play the indif-  
ferent. Therefore,

Suppose we resume discourse? Thou hast  
travelled thus far: but wherefore?

“Solely for Solomon's sake, to see whom earth  
styles Sagest?”

Through her blushes laughed the Queen. “For  
the sake of a Sage? The gay jest!

On high, be communion with Mind—there, Body  
concerns not Balkis:

Down here,—do I make too bold? Sage Solomon,  
—one fool's small kiss!”

## CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI

AH, but how each loved each, Marquis!

Here 's the gallery they trod

Both together, he her god,

She his idol,—lend your rod,

Chamberlain!—ay, there they are—" *Quis*

5

*Separabit?* "—plain those two

Touching words come into view,

Apposite for me and you :

Since they witness to incessant

Love like ours : King Francis, he—

10

Diane the adored one, she—

Prototypes of you and me.

Everywhere is carved her Crescent

With his Salamander-sign—

Flame-fed creature : flame benign

15

To itself or, if malign,

Only to the meddling curious,

—So, be warned, Sir! Where 's my head?

How it wanders! What I said

Merely meant—the creature, fed

20

Thus on flame, was scarce injurious

Save to fools who woke its ire,

Thinking fit to play with fire.

'T is the Crescent you admire?

Then, be Diane! I'll be Francis.

25

Crescents change,—true!—wax and wane,

Woman-like : male hearts retain

Heat nor, once warm, cool again.

## CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI

So, we figure—such our chance is—  
I as man and you as . . . What? 30  
Take offence? My Love forgot  
He plays woman, I do not?

I—the woman? See my habit,  
Ask my people! Anyhow,  
Be we what we may, one vow 35  
Binds us, male or female. Now,—  
Stand, Sir! Read! "*Quis separabit?*"  
Half a mile of pictured way  
Past these palace-walls to-day  
Traversed, this I came to say. 40

You must needs begin to love me;  
First I hated, then, at best,  
—Have it so!—I acquiesced;  
Pure compassion did the rest.  
From below thus raised above me, 45  
Would you, step by step, descend,  
Pity me, become my friend,  
Like me, like less, loathe at end?

That 's the ladder's round you rose by!  
That—my own foot kicked away, 50  
Having raised you: let it stay,  
Serve you for retreating? Nay.  
Close to me you climbed: as close by,  
Keep your station, though the peak  
Reached proves somewhat bare and bleak! 55  
Woman 's strong if man is weak.

Keep here, loving me forever!  
Love's look, gesture, speech, I claim;  
Act love, lie love, all the same—  
Play as earnest were our game! 60

## JOCOSERIA

Lonely I stood long : 't was clever  
When you climbed, before men's eyes,  
Spurned the earth and scaled the skies,  
Gained my peak and grasped your prize.

Here you stood, then, to men's wonder ; 65  
Here you tire of standing ? Kneel !  
Cure what giddiness you feel,  
This way ! Do your senses reel ?  
Not unlikely ! What rolls under ?  
Yawning death in yon abyss 70  
Where the waters whirl and hiss  
Round more frightful peaks than this.

Should my buffet dash you thither . . .  
But be sage ! No watery grave  
Needs await you : seeming brave 75  
Kneel on safe, dear timid slave !  
You surmised, when you climbed hither,  
Just as easy were retreat  
Should you tire, conceive unmeet  
Longer patience at my feet ? 80

Me as standing, you as stooping,—  
Who arranged for each the pose ?  
Lest men think us friends turned foes,  
Keep the attitude you chose !  
Men are used to this same grouping— 85  
I and you like statues seen.  
You and I, no third between,  
Kneel and stand ! That makes the scene.

Mar it—and one buffet . . . Pardon !  
Needless warmth—wise words in waste ! 90  
'T was prostration that replaced  
Kneeling, then ? A proof of taste.

## CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI

Crouch, not kneel, while I mount guard on  
Prostrate love—become no waif,  
No estray to waves that chafe 95  
Disappointed—love 's so safe !

Waves that chafe ? The idlest fancy !  
Peaks that scare ? I think we know  
Walls enclose our sculpture : so  
Grouped, we pose in Fontainebleau. 100  
Up now ! Wherefore hesitancy ?  
Arm in arm and cheek by cheek,  
Laugh with me at waves and peak !  
Silent still ? Why, pictures speak.

See, where Juno strikes Ixion, 105  
Primatice speaks plainly ! Pooh—  
Rather, Florentine Le Roux !  
I 've lost head for who is who—  
So it swims and wanders ! Fie on  
What still proves me female ! Here, 110  
By the staircase !—for we near  
That dark " Gallery of the Deer."

Look me in the eyes once ! Steady !  
Are you faithful now as erst  
On that eve when we two first 115  
Vowed at Avon, blessed and cursed  
Faith and falsehood ? Pale already ?  
Forward ! Must my hand compel  
Entrance—this way ? Exit—well,  
Somehow, somewhere. Who can tell ? 120

What if to the self-same place in  
Rustic Avon, at the door  
Of the village church once more,  
Where a tombstone paves the floor

## JOCOSERIA

By that holy-water basin 125  
You appealed to—"As, below,  
This stone hides its corpse, e'en so  
I your secrets hide"? What ho!

Friends, my four! You, Priest, confess him!  
I have judged the culprit there: 130  
Execute my sentence! Care  
For no mail such cowards wear!  
Done, Priest? Then, absolve and bless him!  
Now—you three, stab thick and fast,  
Deep and deeper! Dead at last? 135  
Thanks, friends—Father, thanks! Aghast?

What one word of his confession  
Would you tell me, though I lured  
With that royal crown abjured  
Just because its bars immured 140  
Love too much? Love burst compression,  
Fled free, finally confessed  
All its secrets to that breast  
Whence . . . let Avon tell the rest!

## MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI

Oh but is it not hard, Dear?

Mine are the nerves to quake at a mouse :  
If a spider drops I shrink with fear :

I should die outright in a haunted house ;  
While for you—did the danger dare bring help—  
From a lion's den I could steal his whelp,  
With a serpent round me, stand stock-still,  
Go sleep in a churchyard,—so would will  
Give me the power to dare and do  
Valiantly—just for you !

Much amiss in the head, Dear,

I toil at a language, tax my brain  
Attempting to draw—the scratches here !

I play, play, practise and all in vain :  
But for you—if my triumph brought you pride,  
I would grapple with Greek Plays till I died,  
Paint a portrait of you—who can tell ?  
Work my fingers off for your “ Pretty well : ”  
Language and painting and music too,  
Easily done—for you !

Strong and fierce in the heart, Dear,

With—more than a will—what seems a power  
To pounce on my prey, love outbroke here  
In flame devouring and to devour.



## JOCOSERIA

Such love has laboured its best and worst  
To win me a lover ; yet, last as first,  
I have not quickened his pulse one beat,  
Fixed a moment's fancy, bitter or sweet :  
Yet the strong fierce heart's love's labour's due,  
Utterly lost, was—you !

## ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE

ONE day it thundered and lightened.  
Two women, fairly frightened,  
Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,  
At the feet of the man who sat betwixt ;  
And " Mercy ! " cried each—" if I tell the truth  
Of a passage in my youth ! "

Said This : " Do you mind the morning  
I met your love with scorning ?  
As the worst of the venom left my lips,  
I thought ' If, despite this lie, he strips  
The mask from my soul with a kiss—I crawl  
His slave,—soul, body and all ! ' "

Said That : " We stood to be married ;  
The priest, or someone, tarried ;  
' If Paradise-door prove locked ? ' smiled you.  
I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,  
' Did one, that 's away, arrive—nor late  
Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate ! ' "

It ceased to lighten and thunder.  
Up started both in wonder,  
Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,  
Then laughed " Confess you believed us, Dear ! "  
" I saw through the joke ! " the man replied  
They re-seated themselves beside.

## IXION

HIGH in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad  
triumph, behold us!

Here the revenge of a God, there the amends  
of a Man.

Whirling forever in torment, flesh once mortal,  
immortal

Made—for a purpose of hate—able to die and  
revive,

Pays to the uttermost pang, then, newly for pay-  
ment replenished,

Doles out—old yet young—agonies ever  
afresh ;

Whence the result above me : torment is bridged  
by a rainbow,—

Tears, sweat, blood,—each spasm, ghastly  
once, glorified now.

Wrung, by the rush of the wheel ordained my  
place of reposing,

Off in a sparklike spray,—flesh become vapour  
thro' pain,—

Flies the bestowment of Zeus, soul's vaunted  
bodily vesture,

Made that his feats observed gain the approval  
of Man,—

Flesh that he fashioned with sense of the earth  
and the sky and the ocean,

Framed should pierce to the star, fitted to pore  
on the plant,—

## IXION

All, for a purpose of hate, re-framed, re-fashioned,  
re-fitted 15  
Till, consummate at length,—lo, the employ-  
ment of sense!  
Pain 's mere minister now to the soul, once  
pledged to her pleasure—  
Soul, if untrammelled by flesh, unapprehensive  
of pain!  
Body, professed soul's slave, which serving be-  
guiled and betrayed her,  
Made things false seem true, cheated thro' eye  
and thro' ear, 20  
Lured thus heart and brain to believe in the lying  
reported,—  
Spurn but the traitorous slave, uttermost atom,  
away,  
What should obstruct soul's rush on the real, the  
only apparent?  
Say I have erred,—how else? Was I Ixion or  
Zeus?  
Foiled by my senses I dreamed; I doubtless  
awaken in wonder: 25  
This proves shine, that—shade? Good was  
the evil that seemed?  
Shall I, with sight thus gained, by torture be  
taught I was blind once?  
Sisuphos, teaches thy stone—Tantalos, teaches  
thy thirst  
Aught which unaided sense, purged pure, less  
plainly demonstrates?  
No, for the past was dream: now that the  
dreamers awake, 30  
Sisuphos scouts low fraud, and to Tantalos treason  
is folly.  
Ask of myself, whose form melts on the mur-  
derous wheel,

## JOCOSERIA

What is the sin which throe and throe prove sin  
to the sinner !

Say the false charge was true,—thus do I ex-  
piate, say,

Arrogant thought, word, deed,—mere man who  
conceited me godlike,

Sat beside Zeus, my friend—knelt before Heré,  
my love !

35

What were the need but of pitying power to  
touch and disperse it,

Film-work—eye's and ear's—all the distraction  
of sense ?

How should the soul not see, not hear,—perceive  
and as plainly

Render, in thought, word, deed, back again  
truth—not a lie ?

40

“Ay, but the pain is to punish thee !” Zeus,  
once more for a pastime,

Play the familiar, the frank ! Speak and have  
speech in return !

I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a people  
obeyed me :

Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey it or  
die :

Wherefore ? Because of the good to the people,  
because of the honour

45

Thence accruing to me, king, the king's law  
was supreme.

What of the weakling, the ignorant criminal ?  
Not who, excuseless,

Breaking my law braved death, knowing his  
deed and its due—

Nay, but the feeble and foolish, the poor trans-  
gressor, of purpose

No whit more than a tree, born to erectness of  
bole,

50

## IXION

Palm or plane or pine, we laud if lofty, columnar—

Loathe if athwart, askew,—leave to the axe  
and the flame!

Where is the vision may penetrate earth and be-  
holding acknowledge

Just one pebble at root ruined the straightness  
of stem?

Whose fine vigilance follows the sapling, accounts  
for the failure,

—Here blew wind, so it bent: there the snow  
lodged, so it broke? 55

Also the tooth of the beast, bird's bill, mere bite  
of the insect

Gnawed, gnarled, warped their worst: passive  
it lay to offence.

King—I was man, no more: what I recognized  
faulty I punished,

Laying it prone: be sure, more than a man  
had I proved, 60

Watch and ward o'er the sapling at birthtime had  
saved it, nor simply

Owned the distortion's excuse,—hindered it  
wholly: nay, more—

Even a man, as I sat in my place to do judgment,  
and pallid

Criminals passing to doom shuddered away at  
my foot,

Could I have probed thro' the face to the heart,  
read plain a repentance, 65

Crime confessed fools' play, virtue ascribed to  
the wise,

Had I not stayed the consignment to doom, not  
dealt the renewed ones

Life to retrace the past, light to retrieve the  
misdeed?

## JOCOSERIA

Thus had I done, and thus to have done much  
more it behoves thee,

Zeus who madest man—flawless or faulty, thy  
work !

70

What if the charge were true, as thou moutheest,—  
Ixion the cherished

Minion of Zeus grew vain, vied with the god-  
ships and fell,

Forfeit thro' arrogance? Stranger! I clothed,  
with the grace of our human,

Inhumanity—gods, natures I likened to ours.

Man among men I had borne me till gods for-  
sooth must regard me

75

—Nay, must approve, applaud, claim as a com-  
rade at last.

Summoned to enter their circle, I sat—their equal,  
how other?

Love should be absolute love, faith is in fulness  
or nought.

“I am thy friend, be mine!” smiled Zeus: “If  
Heré attract thee,”

Blushed the imperial cheek, “then—as thy heart  
may suggest!”

80

Faith in me sprang to the faith, my love hailed  
love as its fellow,

“Zeus, we are friends—how fast! Heré, my  
heart for thy heart!”

Then broke smile into fury of frown, and the  
thunder of “Hence, fool!”

Then thro' the kiss laughed scorn “Limbs or  
a cloud was to clasp?”

Then from Olumpus to Erebus, then from the  
rapture to torment,

85

Then from the fellow of gods—misery's mate,  
to the man!

## IXION

—Man henceforth and forever, who lent from the  
glow of his nature

Warmth to the cold, with light coloured the  
black and the blank.

So did a man conceive of your passion, you passion-  
protesters !

So did he trust, so love—being the truth of your lie! 90  
You to aspire to be Man ! Man made you who  
vainly would ape him :

You are the hollowness, he—filling you, falsi-  
fies void.

Even as—witness the emblem, Hell's sad triumph  
suspended,

Born of my tears, sweat, blood—bursting to  
vapour above—

Arching my torment, an iris ghostlike startles the  
darkness, 95

Cold white—jewelry quenched—justifies, glori-  
fies pain.

Strive, mankind, though strife endure through  
endless obstruction,

Stage after stage, each rise marred by as certain  
a fall !

Baffled forever—yet never so baffled but, e'en in  
the baffling,

When Man's strength proves weak, checked in  
the body or soul— 100

Whatsoever the medium, flesh or essence,—Ixion's  
Made for a purpose of hate,—clothing the  
entity Thou,

—Medium whence that entity strives for the Not-  
Thou beyond it,

Fire elemental, free, frame unencumbered, the  
All,—

Never so baffled but—when, on the verge of an  
alien existence, 105



## JOCOSERIA

Heartened to press, by pangs burst to the infinite  
Pure,  
Nothing is reached but the ancient weakness still  
that arrests strength,  
Circumambient still, still the poor human array,  
Pride and revenge and hate and cruelty—all it has  
burst through,  
Thought to escape,—fresh formed, found in the  
fashion it fled,—110  
Never so baffled but—when Man pays the price  
of endeavour,  
Thunderstruck, downthrust, Tartaros-doomed  
to the wheel,—  
Then, ay, then, from the tears and sweat and  
blood of his torment,  
E'en from the triumph of Hell, up let him look  
and rejoice!  
What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that turns  
to a rapture115  
Pain—and despair's murk mists blends in a  
rainbow of hope?  
What is beyond the obstruction, stage by stage  
tho' it baffle?  
Back must I fall, confess "Ever the weakness  
I fled" ?  
No, for beyond, far, far is a Purity all-unobstructed !  
Zeus was Zeus—not Man : wrecked by his  
weakness, I whirl.120  
Out of the wreck I rise—past Zeus to the Potency  
o'er him !  
I—to have hailed him my friend ! I—to have  
clasped her—my love !  
Pallid birth of my pain,—where light, where light  
is, aspiring  
Thither I rise, whilst thou—Zeus, keep the god-  
ship and sink !

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“THIS now, this other story makes amends  
And justifies our Mishna,” quoth the Jew  
Aforesaid. “Tell it, learnedest of friends!”

---

A certain morn broke beautiful and blue  
O'er Schiphaz city, bringing joy and mirth, 5  
—So had ye deemed ; while the reverse was true,

Since one small house there gave a sorrow birth  
In such black sort that, to each faithful eye,  
Midnight, not morning settled on the earth.

How else, when it grew certain thou wouldst die, 10  
Our much-enlightened master, Israel's prop,  
Eximious Jochanan Ben Sabbathai ?

Old, yea but, undiminished of a drop,  
The vital essence pulsed through heart and brain ;  
Time left unsickled yet the plenteous crop 15

On poll and chin and cheek, whereof a skein  
Handmaids might weave—hairs silk-soft, silver-  
white,

Such as the wool-plant's ; none the less in vain

Had Physic striven her best against the spite  
Of fell disease : the Rabbi must succumb ; 20  
And, round the couch whereon in piteous plight

He lay a-dying, scholars,—awe-struck, dumb  
Throughout the night-watch,—roused themselves  
and spoke

One to the other : “ Ere death’s touch benumb

“His active sense,—while yet ’neath Reason’s yoke 25  
Obedient toils his tongue,—befits we claim  
The fruit of long experience, bid this oak

“ Shed us an acorn which may, all the same,  
Grow to a temple-pillar,—dear that day !—  
When Israel’s scattered seed finds place and name 30

“ Among the envious nations. Lamp us, pray,  
Thou the Enlightener ! Partest hence in peace ?  
Hailest without regret—much less, dismay—

“ The hour of thine approximate release  
From fleshly bondage soul hath found obstruct ? 35  
Calmly envisagest the sure increase

“ Of knowledge ? Eden’s tree must hold unplucked  
Some apple, sure, has never tried thy tooth,  
Juicy with sapience thou hast sought, not sucked ?

“ Say, does age acquiesce in vanished youth ? 40  
Still towers thy purity above—as erst—  
Our pleasant follies ? Be thy last word—truth ! ”

The Rabbi groaned ; then, grimly, “ Last as first  
The truth speak I—in boyhood who began  
Striving to live an angel, and, amerced 45

“ For such presumption, die now hardly man.  
What have I proved of life ? To live, indeed,  
That much I learned : but here lies Jochanan

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“ More luckless than stood David when, to speed  
His fighting with the Philistine, they brought 50  
Saul’s harness forth : whereat, ‘ Alack, I need

“ ‘ Armour to arm me, but have never fought  
With sword and spear, nor tried to manage shield,  
Proving arms’ use, as well-trained warrior ought.

“ ‘ Only a sling and pebbles can I wield ! ’ 55  
So he : while I, contrariwise, ‘ No trick  
Of weapon helpful on the battle-field

“ ‘ Comes unfamiliar to my theoric :  
But, bid me put in practice what I know,  
Give me a sword—it stings like Moses’ stick, 60

“ ‘ A serpent I let drop apace.’ E’en so,  
I,—able to comport me at each stage  
Of human life as never here below

“ Man played his part,—since mine the heritage  
Of wisdom carried to that perfect pitch, 65  
Ye rightly praise,—I, therefore, who, thus sage,

“ Could sure act man triumphantly, enrich  
Life’s annals with example how I played  
Lover, Bard, Soldier, Statist,—(all of which

“ Parts in presentment failing, cries invade 70  
The world’s ear—‘ Ah, the Past, the pearl-gift  
thrown  
To hogs, time’s opportunity we made

“ ‘ So light of, only recognized when flown !  
Had we been wise ! ’)—in fine, I—wise enough,—  
What profit brings me wisdom never shown 75

## JOCOSERIA

“Just when its showing would from each rebuff  
Shelter weak virtue, threaten back to bounds  
Encroaching vice, tread smooth each track too  
rough

“For youth’s unsteady footstep, climb the rounds  
Of life’s long ladder, one by slippery one, 80  
Yet make no stumble? Me hard fate confounds

“With that same crowd of wailers I outrun  
By promising to teach another cry  
Of more hilarious mood than theirs, the sun

“I look my last at is insulted by. 85  
What cry,—ye ask? Give ear on every side!  
Witness yon Lover! ‘How entrapped am I!

“‘Methought, because a virgin’s rose-lip vied  
With ripe Khubbezleh’s, needs must beauty mate  
With meekness and discretion in a bride: 90

“‘Bride she became to me who wail—too late—  
*Unwise I loved!*’ That’s one cry. ‘Mind’s my  
gift:  
I might have loaded me with lore, full weight

“‘Pressed down and running over at each rift  
O’ the brain-bag where the famished clung and fed. 95  
I filled it with what rubbish!—would not sift

“‘The wheat from chaff, sound grain from musty  
—shed

Poison abroad as oft as nutriment—  
And sighing say but as my fellows said,

“‘*Unwise I learned!*’ That’s two. ‘In dwarf’s-  
play spent 100

Was giant’s prowess: warrior all unversed  
In war’s right waging, I struck brand, was lent

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“ ‘For steel’s fit service, on mere stone—and  
cursed

Alike the shocked limb and the shivered steel,  
Seeing too late the blade’s true use which erst 105

“ ‘How was I blind to ! My cry swells the peal—  
*Unwise I fought !*’ That’s three. But wherefore  
waste

Breath on the wailings longer ? Why reveal

“ A root of bitterness whereof the taste  
Is noisome to Humanity at large ? 110  
First we get Power, but Power absurdly placed

“ In Folly’s keeping, who resigns her charge  
To Wisdom when all Power grows nothing worth :  
Bones marrowless are mocked with helm and targe

“ When, like your Master’s, soon below the earth 115  
With worms shall warfare only be. Farewell,  
Children ! I die a failure since my birth ! ”

“ Not so ! ” arose a protest as, pell-mell,  
They pattered from his chamber to the street,  
Bent on a last resource. Our Targums tell 120

That such resource there is. Put case, there  
meet

The Nine Points of Perfection—rarest chance—  
Within some saintly teacher whom the fleet

Years, in their blind implacable advance,  
O’ertake before fit teaching born of these 125  
Have magnified his scholars’ countenance,—

If haply folk compassionating please  
To render up—according to his store,  
Each one—a portion of the life he sees

## JOCOSERIA

Hardly worth saving when 't is set before 130  
Earth's benefit should the Saint, Hakkadosh,  
Favoured thereby, attain to full fourscore—

If such contribute (Scoffer, spare thy “Bosh!”)  
A year, a month, a day, an hour—to eke  
Life out,—in him away the gift shall wash 135

That much of ill-spent time recorded, streak  
The twilight of the so-assisted sage  
With a new sunrise : truth, though strange to  
speak !

Quick to the doorway, then, where youth and age,  
All Israel, thronging, waited for the last 140  
News of the loved one. “'T is the final stage :

“Art's utmost done, the Rabbi's feet tread fast  
The way of all flesh !” So announced that apt  
Olive-branch Tsaddik : “Yet, O Brethren, cast

“No eye to earthward ! Look where heaven has  
clapped 145  
Morning's extinguisher—yon ray-shot robe  
Of sun-threads—on the constellation mapped

“And mentioned by our Elders,—yea, from Job  
Down to Satam,—as figuring forth—what ?  
Perpend a mystery ! Ye call it *Dob*— 150

“‘The Bear’ : I trow, a wiser name than that  
Were *Aisch*—‘The Bier’ : a corpse those four  
stars hold,  
Which—are not those Three Daughters weeping at,

“*Banoth* ? I judge so : list while I unfold  
The reason. As in twice twelve hours this Bier 155  
Goes and returns, about the East-cone rolled,

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“So may a setting luminary here  
Be rescued from extinction, rolled anew  
Upon its track of labour, strong and clear,

“About the Pole—that Salem, every Jew 160  
Helps to build up when thus he saves some Saint  
Ordained its architect. Ye grasp the clue

“To all ye seek? The Rabbi’s lamp-flame faint  
Sinks : would ye raise it? Lend then life from  
yours,  
Spare each his oil-drop ! Do I need acquaint 165

“The Chosen how self-sacrifice ensures  
Ten-fold requital?—urge ye emulate  
The fame of those Old Just Ones death procures

“Such praise for, that ’t is now men’s sole debate  
Which of the Ten, who volunteered at Rome 170  
To die for glory to our Race, was great

“Beyond his fellows? Was it thou—the comb  
Of iron carded, flesh from bone, away,  
While thy lips sputtered thro’ their bloody foam

“Without a stoppage (O brave Akiba !)  
‘Hear, Israel, our Lord God is One’ ? Or thou, 175  
Jischab?—who smiledst, burning, since there lay,

“Burning along with thee, our Law ! I trow,  
Such martyrdom might tax flesh to afford :  
While that for which I make petition now, 180

“To what amounts it? Youngster, wilt thou  
hoard  
Each minute of long years thou look’st to spend  
In dalliance with thy spouse? Hast thou so soared,



## JOCOSERIA

“Singer of songs, all out of sight of friend  
And teacher, warbling like a woodland bird, 185  
There 's left no Selah, 'twixt two psalms, to lend

“Our late-so-tuneful quirist? Thou, averred  
The fighter born to plant our lion-flag  
Once more on Zion's mount,—doth, all-unheard,

“My pleading fail to move thee? Toss some rag 190  
Shall staunch our wound, some minute never  
missed  
From swordsman's lustihood like thine! Wilt lag

“In liberal bestowment, show close fist  
When open palm we look for,—thou, wide-known  
For statecraft? whom, 't is said, an if thou list, 195

“The Shah himself would seat beside his throne,  
So valued were advice from thee” . . . But here  
He stopped short: such a hubbub! Not alone

From those addressed, but, far as well as near,  
The crowd broke into clamour: “Mine, mine,  
mine— 200  
Lop from my life the excrescence, never fear!

“At me thou lookedst, markedst me! Assign  
To me that privilege of granting life—  
Mine, mine!” Then he: “Be patient! I combine

“The needful portions only, wage no strife 205  
With Nature's law nor seek to lengthen out  
The Rabbi's day unduly. 'T is the knife

“I stop,—would cut its thread too short. About  
As much as helps life last the proper term,  
The appointed Fourscore,—that I crave, and scout 210

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“A too-prolonged existence. Let the worm  
Change at fit season to the butterfly!  
And here a story strikes me, to confirm

“This judgment. Of our worthies, none ranks  
high  
As Perida who kept the famous school : 215  
None rivalled him in patience : none ! For why ?

“In lecturing it was his constant rule,  
Whatever he expounded, to repeat  
—Ay, and keep on repeating, lest some fool

“Should fail to understand him fully—(feat 220  
Unparalleled, Uzzean !)—do ye mark ?—  
Five hundred times ! So might he entrance beat

“For knowledge into howsoever dark  
And dense the brain-pan. Yet it happed, at close  
Of one especial lecture, not one spark 225

“Of light was found to have illumed the rows  
Of pupils round their pedagogue. ‘What, still  
Impenetrable to me ? Then—here goes !’

“And for a second time he sets the rill  
Of knowledge running, and five hundred times 230  
More re-repeats the matter—and gains *nil*.

“Out broke a voice from heaven : ‘Thy patience  
climbs  
Even thus high. Choose ! Wilt thou, rather, quick  
Ascend to bliss—or, since thy zeal sublimes

“ ‘Such drudgery, wilt thy back still bear its crick, 235  
Bent o’er thy class,—thy voice drone spite of  
drouth,—  
Five hundred years more at thy desk wilt stick ?’

## JOCOSERIA

“ ‘To heaven with me!’ was in the good man’s  
mouth,  
When all his scholars,—cruel-kind were they!—  
Stopped utterance, from East, West, North and  
South,

240

“ Rending the welkin with their shout of ‘Nay—  
No heaven as yet for our instructor! Grant  
Five hundred years on earth for Perida!’

“ And so long did he keep instructing! Want  
Our Master no such misery! I but take  
Three months of life marital. Ministrant

245

“ Be thou of so much, Poet! Bold I make,  
Swordsman, with thy frank offer!—and conclude,  
Statist, with thine! One year,—ye will not shake

“ My purpose to accept no more. So rude?  
The very boys and girls, forsooth, must press  
And proffer their addition? Thanks! The mood

250

“ Is laudable, but I reject, no less,  
One month, week, day of life more. Leave my  
gown,  
Ye overbold ones! Your life’s gift, you guess,

255

“ Were good as any? Rudesby, get thee down!  
Set my feet free, or fear my staff! Farewell,  
Seniors and saviours, sharers of renown

“ With Jochanan henceforward!” Straightway  
fell  
Sleep on the sufferer; who awoke in health,  
Hale every way, so potent was the spell.

260

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

O the rare Spring-time ! Who is he by stealth  
Approaches Jochanan ?—embowered that sits  
Under his vine and figtree mid the wealth

Of garden-sights and sounds, since intermits 265  
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays nor stints  
The rose her smell. In homage that befits

The musing Master, Tsaddik, see, imprints  
A kiss on the extended foot, low bends  
Forehead to earth, then, all-obsequious, hints 270

“What if it should be time ? A period ends—  
That of the Lover's gift—his quarter-year  
Of lustihood : 't is just thou make amends,

“Return that loan with usury : so, here  
Come I, of thy Disciples delegate, 275  
Claiming our lesson from thee. Make appear

“Thy profit from experience ! Plainly state  
How men should Love !” Thus he : and to him  
thus  
The Rabbi : “Love, ye call it ?—rather, Hate !

“What wouldst thou ? Is it needful I discuss 280  
Wherefore new sweet wine, poured in bottles caked  
With old strong wine's deposit, offers us

“Spoilt liquor we recoil from, thirst-unslaked ?  
Like earth-smoke from a crevice, out there wound  
Languors and yearnings : not a sense but ached 285

“Weighed on by fancied form and feature, sound  
Of silver word and sight of sunny smile :  
No beckoning of a flower-branch, no profound

## JOCOSERIA

“Purple of noon-oppression, no light wile  
O’ the Westwind, but transformed itself till—brief— 290  
Before me stood the phantasy ye style

“Youth’s love, the joy that shall not come to grief,  
Born to endure, eternal, unimpaired  
By custom the accloyer, time the thief.

“Had Age’s hard cold knowledge only spared 295  
That ignorance of Youth ! But now the dream,  
Fresh as from Paradise, alighting fared

“As fares the pigeon, finding what may seem  
Her nest’s safe hollow holds a snake inside  
Coiled to enclasp her. See, Eve stands supreme 300

“In youth and beauty ! Take her for thy bride !  
What Youth deemed crystal, Age finds out was  
dew  
Morn set a-sparkle, but which noon quick dried

“While Youth bent gazing at its red and blue  
Supposed perennial,—never dreamed the sun 305  
Which kindled the display would quench it too.

“Graces of shape and colour—everyone  
With its appointed period of decay  
When ripe to purpose ! ‘Still, these dead and done,

“ ‘Survives the woman-nature—the soft sway 310  
Of undefinable omnipotence  
O’er our strong male-stuff, we of Adam’s clay.’

“Ay, if my physics taught not why and whence  
The attraction ! Am I like the simple steer  
Who, from his pasture lured inside the fence 315

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“Where yoke and goad await him, holds that mere  
Kindliness prompts extension of the hand  
Hollowed for barley, which drew near and near

“His nose—in proof that, of the horned band,  
The farmer best affected him? Beside, 320  
Steer, since his calfhood, got to understand

“Farmers a many in the world so wide  
Were ready with a handful just as choice  
Or choicer—maize and cummin, treats untried.

“Shall I wed wife, and all my days rejoice 325  
I gained the peacock? ‘Las me, round I look,  
And lo—‘With me thou wouldst have blamed no  
voice

“‘Like hers that daily deafens like a rook :  
I am the phoenix!’—‘I, the lark, the dove,  
—The owl,’ for aught knows he who blindly took 330

“Peacock for partner, while the vale, the grove,  
The plain held bird-mates in abundance. There !  
Youth, try fresh capture! Age has found out Love

“Long ago. War seems better worth man’s care.  
But leave me! Disappointment finds a balm 335  
Haply in slumber.” “This first step o’ the stair

“To knowledge fails me, but the victor’s palm  
Lies on the next to tempt him overleap  
A stumbling-block. Experienced, gather calm,

“Thou excellence of Judah, cured by sleep 340  
Which ushers in the Warrior, to replace  
The Lover! At due season I shall reap

## JOCOSERIA

“Fruit of my planting!” So, with lengthened face,  
Departed Tsaddik : and three moons more waxed  
And waned, and not until the Summer-space 345

Waned likewise, any second visit taxed  
The Rabbi's patience. But at three months' end,  
Behold, supine beneath a rock, relaxed

The sage lay musing till the noon should spend  
Its ardour. Up comes Tsaddik, who but he, 350  
With “Master, may I warn thee, nor offend,

“That time comes round again? We look to see  
Sprout from the old branch—not the youngling  
twig—  
But fruit of sycamine : deliver me,

“To share among my fellows, some plump fig, 355  
Juicy as seedy! That same man of war,  
Who, with a scantling of his store, made big

“Thy starveling nature, caused thee, safe from scar,  
To share his gains by long acquaintanceship  
With bump and bruise and all the knocks that are 360

“Of battle dowry,—he bids loose thy lip,  
Explain the good of battle! Since thou know'st  
Let us know likewise! Fast the moments slip,

“More need that we improve them!”—“Ay, we  
boast,  
We warriors in our youth, that with the sword 365  
Man goes the swiftest to the uttermost—

“Takes the straight way thro' lands yet unexplored  
To absolute Right and Good,—may so obtain  
God's glory and man's weal too long ignored,

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“Too late attained by preachments all in vain— 370  
The passive process. Knots get tangled worse  
By toying with : does cut cord close again ?

“Moreover there is blessing in the curse  
Peace-praisers call war. What so sure evolves  
All the capacities of soul, proves nurse 375

“Of that self-sacrifice in men which solves  
The riddle—*Wherein differs Man from beast ?*  
Foxes boast cleverness and courage wolves :

“Nowhere but in mankind is found the least  
Touch of an impulse ‘To our fellows—good 380  
I’ the highest !—not diminished but increased

“ ‘By the condition plainly understood  
—Such good shall be attained at price of hurt  
I’ the highest to ourselves !’ Fine sparks, that brood

“Confusedly in Man, ’t is war bids spurt 385  
Forth into flame : as fares the meteor-mass,  
Whereof no particle but holds inert

“Some seed of light and heat, however crass  
The enclosure, yet avails not to discharge  
Its radiant birth before there come to pass 390

“Some push external,—strong to set at large  
Those dormant fire-seeds, whirl them in a trice  
Through heaven and light up earth from marge  
to marge :

“Since force by motion makes—what erst was  
ice—

Crash into fervency and so expire, 395  
Because some Djinn has hit on a device



## JOCOSERIA

“For proving the full prettiness of fire !  
Ay, thus we prattle—young : but old—why, first,  
Where ’s that same Right and Good—(the wise  
inquire)—

“So absolute, it warrants the outburst 400  
Of blood, tears, all war’s woeful consequence,  
That comes of the fine flaring? Which plague  
cursed

“The more your benefited Man—offence,  
Or what suppressed the offender? Say it did—  
Show us the evil cured by violence, 405

“Submission cures not also ! Lift the lid  
From the maturing crucible, we find  
Its slow sure coaxing-out of virtue hid

“In that same meteor-mass, hath uncombined  
Those particles and, yielding for result 410  
Gold, not mere flame, by so much leaves behind

“The heroic product. E’en the simple cult  
Of Edom’s children wisely bids them turn  
Cheek to the smiter with ‘*Sic Jesus vult.*’

“Say there ’s a tyrant by whose death we earn 415  
Freedom, and justify a war to wage :  
Good !—were we only able to discern

“Exactly how to reach and catch and cage  
Him only and no innocent beside !  
Whereas the folk whereon war wreaks its rage 420

“—How shared they his ill-doing? Far and wide  
The victims of our warfare strew the plain,  
Ten thousand dead, whereof not one but died

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“ In faith that vassals owed their suzerain  
Life : therefore each paid tribute,—honest soul,— 425  
To that same Right and Good ourselves are fain

“ To call exclusively our end. From bole  
(Since ye accept in me a sycamine)  
Pluck, eat, digest a fable—yea, the sole

“ Fig I afford you ! ‘ Dost thou dwarf my vine ? ’ 430  
(So did a certain husbandman address  
The tree which faced his field), ‘ Receive condign

“ ‘ Punishment, prompt removal by the stress  
Of axe I forthwith lay unto thy root ! ’  
Long did he hack and hew, the root no less 435

“ As long defied him, for its tough strings shoot  
As deep down as the boughs above aspire :  
All that he did was—shake to the tree’s foot

“ Leafage and fruitage, things we most require  
For shadow and refreshment : which good deed 440  
Thoroughly done, behold the axe-haft tires

“ His hand, and he desisting leaves unfreed  
The vine he hacked and hewed for. Comes a frost,  
One natural night’s work, and there’s little need

“ Of hacking, hewing : lo, the tree’s a ghost ! 445  
Perished it starves, black death from topmost  
bough  
To farthest-reaching fibre ! Shall I boast

“ My rough work,—warfare,—helped more ?  
Loving, now—  
That, by comparison, seems wiser, since  
The loving fool was able to avow 450

## JOCOSERIA

“ He could effect his purpose, just evince  
Love’s willingness,—once ’ware of what she lacked,  
His loved one,—to go work for that, nor wince

“ At self-expenditure : he neither hacked  
Nor hewed, but when the lady of his field 455  
Required defence because the sun attacked,

“ He, failing to obtain a fitter shield,  
Would interpose his body, and so blaze,  
Blest in the burning. Ah, were mine to wield

“ The intellectual weapon—poet-lays,— 460  
How preferably had I sung one song  
Which . . . but my sadness sinks me: go your ways!

“ I sleep out disappointment.” “ Come along,  
Never lose heart ! There ’s still as much again  
Of our bestowment left to right the wrong 465

“ Done by its earlier moiety—explain  
Wherefore, who may ! The Poet’s mood comes next.  
Was he not wishful the poetic vein

“ Should pulse within him ? Jochanan, thou  
reck’st  
Little of what a generous flood shall soon 470  
Float thy clogged spirit free and unperplexed

“ Above dry dubitation ! Song ’s the boon  
Shall make amends for my untoward mistake  
That Joshua-like thou couldst bid sun and  
moon—

“ Fighter and Lover,—which for most men make 475  
All they descry in heaven,—stand both stock-still  
And lend assistance. Poet shalt thou wake ! ”

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

Autumn brings Tsaddik. “Ay, there speeds the  
rill

Loaded with leaves : a scowling sky, beside :  
The wind makes olive-trees up yonder hill 480

“Whiten and shudder—symptoms far and wide  
Of gleaning-time’s approach ; and glean good store  
May I presume to trust we shall, thou tried

“And ripe experimenter ! Three months more  
Have ministered to growth of Song : that graft 485  
Into thy sterile stock has found at core

“Moisture, I warrant, hitherto unquaffed  
By boughs, however florid, wanting sap  
Of prose-experience which provides the draught

“Which song-sprouts, wanting, wither : vain we tap 490  
A youngling stem all green and immature :  
Experience must secret the stuff, our hap

“Will be to quench Man’s thirst with, glad and sure  
That fancy wells up through corrective fact :  
Missing which test of truth, though flowers allure 495

“The goodman’s eye with promise, soon the pact  
Is broken, and ’t is flowers,—mere words,—he  
finds

When things,—that ’s fruit,—he looked for. Well,  
once cracked

“The nut, how glad my tooth the kernel grinds !  
Song may henceforth boast substance ! Therefore,  
hail

Proser and poet, perfect in both kinds ! 500

“Thou from whose eye hath dropped the envious  
scale

Which hides the truth of things and substitutes  
Deceptive show, unaided optics fail

## JOCOSERIA

“To transpierce,—hast entrusted to the lute’s 505  
Soft but sure guardianship some unrevealed  
Secret shall lift mankind above the brutes

“As only knowledge can?” “A fount unsealed”  
(Sighed Jochanan) “should seek the heaven in leaps  
To die in dew-gems—not find death, congealed 510

“By contact with the cavern’s nether deeps,  
Earth’s secretest foundation where, enswathed  
In dark and fear, primæval mystery sleeps—

“Petrific fount wherein my fancies bathed  
And straight turned ice. My dreams of good and fair 515  
In soaring upwards had dissolved, unscathed

“By any influence of the kindly air,  
Singing, as each took flight, The Future—that’s  
Our destination, mists turn rainbows there,

“Which sink to fog, confounded in the flats 520  
O’ the Present! Day’s the song-time for the lark,  
Night for her music boasts but owls and bats.

“And what’s the Past but night—the deep and  
dark  
Ice-spring I speak of, corpse-thick with its  
drowned  
Dead fancies which no sooner touched the mark 525

“They aimed at—fact—than all at once they found  
Their film-wings freeze, henceforth unfit to reach  
And roll in æther, revel—robed and crowned

“As truths, confirmed by falsehood all and each—  
Sovereign and absolute and ultimate! 530  
Up with them, skyward, Youth, ere Age impeach

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“Thy least of promises to re-instate  
Adam in Eden ! Sing on, ever sing,  
Chirp till thou burst !—the fool cicada’s fate,

“Who holds that after Summer next comes Spring, 535  
Than Summer’s self sun-warmed, spice-scented  
more.

Fighting was better ! There, no fancy-fling

“Pitches you past the point was reached of yore  
By Sampsons, Abners, Joabs, Judases,  
The mighty men of valour who, before 540

“Our little day, did wonders none profess  
To doubt were fable and not fact, so trust  
By fancy-flights to emulate much less.

“Were I a Statesman, now ! Why, that were  
just  
To pinnacle my soul, mankind above, 545  
A-top the universe : no vulgar lust

“To gratify—fame, greed, at this remove  
Looked down upon so far—or overlooked  
So largely, rather—that mine eye should rove

“World-wide and rummage earth, the many-  
nooked, 550  
Yet find no unit of the human flock  
Caught straying but straight comes back hooked  
and crooked

“By the strong shepherd who, from out his  
stock  
Of aids proceeds to treat each ailing fleece,  
Here stimulate to growth, curtail and dock 555

## JOCOSERIA

“There, baldness or excrescence,—that, with  
grease,  
This, with up-grubbing of the bristly patch  
Born of the tick-bite. How supreme a peace

“Steals o’er the Statist,—while, in wit, a match  
For shrewd Ahithophel, in wisdom . . . well, 560  
His name escapes me—somebody, at watch

“And ward, the fellow of Ahithophel  
In guidance of the Chosen!”—at which word  
Eyes closed and fast asleep the Rabbi fell.

“Cold weather!” shivered Tsaddik. “Yet the  
hoard 565  
Of the sagacious ant shows garnered grain,  
Ever abundant most when fields afford

“Least pasture, and alike disgrace the plain  
Tall tree and lowly shrub. ’T is so with us  
Mortals : our age stores wealth ye seek in vain 570

“While busy youth culls just what we discuss  
At leisure in the last days : and the last  
Truly are these for Jochanan, whom thus

“I make one more appeal to ! Thine amassed  
Experience, now or never, let escape 575  
Some portion of ! For I perceive aghast

“The end approaches, while they jeer and jape,  
These sons of Shimei : ‘Justify your boast !  
What have ye gained from Death by twelve  
months’ rape ?’

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“Statesman, what cure hast thou for—least and  
most—

580

Popular grievances? What nostrum, say,  
Will make the Rich and Poor, expertly dosed,

“Forget disparity, bid each go gay  
That, with his bauble,—with his burden, this?  
Propose an alkahest shall melt away

585

“Men’s lacquer, show by prompt analysis  
Which is the metal, which the make-believe,  
So that no longer brass shall find, gold miss

“Coinage and currency? Make haste, retrieve  
The precious moments, Master!” Whereunto  
There snarls an “Ever laughing in thy sleeve,

590

“Pert Tsaddik? Youth indeed sees plain a clue  
To guide man where life’s wood is intricate :  
How shall he fail to thrid its thickest through

“When every oak-trunk takes the eye? Elate  
He goes from bole to brushwood, plunging finds—  
Smothered in briars—that the small ’s the great !

595

“All men are men: I would all minds were minds!  
Whereas ’t is just the many’s mindless mass  
That most needs helping : labourers and hinds

600

“We legislate for—not the cultured class  
Which law-makes for itself nor needs the whip  
And bridle,—proper help for mule and ass,

“Did the brutes know! In vain our statesmanship  
Strives at contenting the rough multitude :  
Still the ox cries ‘’T is me thou shouldst equip

605



## JOCOSERIA

“ ‘With equine trappings!’ or, in humbler mood,  
‘Cribful of corn for me! and, as for work—  
Adequate rumination o’er my food!’

“ Better remain a Poet! Needs it irk 610  
Such an one if light, kindled in his sphere,  
Fail to transfuse the Mizraim cold and murk

“ Round about Goshen? Though light disappear,  
Shut inside,—temporary ignorance  
Got outside of, lo, light emerging clear 615

“ Shows each astonished starrer the expanse  
Of heaven made bright with knowledge! That’s  
the way,  
The only way—I see it at a glance—

“ To legislate for earth! As poet. . . . Stay!  
What is . . . I would that . . . were it . . . I  
had been . . . 620  
O sudden change, as if my arid clay

“ Burst into bloom! . . . ” “ A change indeed, I  
ween,  
And change the last!” sighed Tsaddik as he kissed  
The closing eyelids. “ Just as those serene

“ Princes of Night apprised me! Our acquist 625  
Of life is spent, since corners only four  
Hath Aisch, and each in turn was made desist

“ In passage round the Pole (O Mishna’s lore—  
Little it profits here!) by strenuous tug  
Of friends who eked out thus to full fourscore 630

“ The Rabbi’s years. I see each shoulder shrug!  
What have we gained? Away the Bier may roll!  
To-morrow, when the Master’s grave is dug,

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“In with his body I may pitch the scroll  
I hoped to glorify with, text and gloss, 635  
My Science of Man’s Life: one blank’s the whole!

“Love, war, song, statesmanship—no gain, all loss,  
The stars’ bestowment! We on our return  
To-morrow merely find—not gold but dross,

“The body not the soul. Come, friends, we learn 640  
At least thus much by our experiment—  
That—that . . . well, find what, whom it may  
concern!”

But next day through the city rumours went  
Of a new persecution; so, they fled  
All Israel, each man,—this time,—from his tent, 645

Tsaddik among the foremost. When, the dread  
Subsiding, Israel ventured back again  
Some three months after, to the cave they sped

Where lay the Sage,—a reverential train!  
Tsaddik first enters. “What is this I view? 650  
The Rabbi still alive? No stars remain

“Of Aisch to stop within their courses. True,  
I mind me, certain gamesome boys must urge  
Their offerings on me: can it be—one threw

“Life at him and it stuck? There needs the scourge 655  
To teach that urchin manners! Prithee, grant  
Forgiveness if we pretermit thy dirge

“Just to explain no friend was ministrant,  
This time, of life to thee! Some jackanapes,  
I gather, has presumed to foist his scant 660

## JOCOSERIA

“Scurvy unripe existence—wilding grapes  
Grass-green and sorrel-sour—on that grand wine,  
Mighty as mellow, which, so fancy shapes,

“May fitly image forth this life of thine  
Fed on the last low fattening lees—condensed 665  
Elixir, no milk-mildness of the vine !

“Rightly with Tsaddik wert thou now incensed  
Had he been witting of the mischief wrought  
When, for elixir, verjuice he dispensed !”

And slowly woke,—like Shushan’s flower besought 670  
By over-curious handling to unloose  
The curtained secrecy wherein she thought

Her captive bee, mid store of sweets to choose,  
Would loll, in gold pavilioned lie unteased,  
Sucking on, sated never,—whose, O whose 675

Might seem that countenance, uplift, all eased  
Of old distraction and bewilderment,  
Absurdly happy? “How ye have appeased

“The strife within me, bred this whole content,  
This utter acquiescence in my past, 680  
Present and future life,—by whom was lent

“The power to work this miracle at last,—  
Exceeds my guess. Though—*ignorance confirmed*  
*By knowledge* sounds like paradox, I cast

“Vainly about to tell you—fitlier termed— 685  
Of calm struck by encountering opposites,  
Each nullifying either! Henceforth wormed

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“From out my heart is every snake that bites  
The dove that else would brood there : doubt,  
    which kills  
With hiss of ‘What if sorrows end delights?’ 690

“Fear which stings ease with ‘Work the Master  
    wills!’

Experience which coils round and strangles quick  
Each hope with ‘Ask the Past if hoping skills

“‘To work accomplishment, or proves a trick  
Wiling thee to endeavour! Strive, fool, stop 695  
Nowise, so live, so die—that’s law! why kick

“‘Against the pricks?’ All out-wormed! Slum-  
    ber, drop

Thy films once more and veil the bliss within!  
Experience strangle hope? Hope waves a-top

“Her wings triumphant! Come what will, I win, 700  
Whoever loses! Every dream’s assured  
Of soberest fulfilment. Where’s a sin

“Except in doubting that the light, which lured  
The unwary into darkness, meant no wrong  
Had I but marched on bold, nor paused immured 705

“By mists I should have pressed thro’, passed  
    along

My way henceforth rejoicing? Not the boy’s  
Passionate impulse he conceits so strong,

“Which, at first touch, truth, bubble-like, de-  
    stroys,—

Not the man’s slow conviction ‘Vanity 710  
Of vanities—alike my griefs and joys!’

## JOCOSERIA

“Ice!—thawed (look up) each bird, each insect  
by—

(Look round) by all the plants that break in bloom,  
(Look down) by every dead friend’s memory

“That smiles ‘Am I the dust within my tomb?’ 715  
Not either, but both these—amalgam rare—  
Mix in a product, not from Nature’s womb,

“But stuff which He the Operant—who shall dare  
Describe His operation?—strikes alive  
And thaumaturgic. I nor know nor care 720

“How from this tohu-bohu—hopes which dive,  
And fears which soar—faith, ruined through and  
through  
By doubt, and doubt, faith treads to dust—revive

“In some surprising sort,—as see, they do!—  
Not merely foes no longer but fast friends. 725  
What does it mean unless—O strange and new

“Discovery!—this life proves a wine-press—  
blends  
Evil and good, both fruits of Paradise,  
Into a novel drink which—who intends

“To quaff, must bear a brain for ecstasies 730  
Attempered, not this all-inadequate  
Organ which, quivering within me, dies

“—Nay, lives!—what, how,—too soon, or else  
too late—

I was—I am . . .” (“He babbleth!” Tsaddik  
mused)

“O Thou Almighty who canst re-instate 735

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“Truths in their primal clarity, confused  
By man’s perception, which is man’s and made  
To suit his service,—how, once disabused

“Of reason which sees light half shine half shade,  
Because of flesh, the medium that adjusts 740  
Purity to his visuals, both an aid

“And hindrance,—how to eyes earth’s air encrusts,  
When purged and perfect to receive truth’s beam  
Pouring itself on the new sense it trusts

“With all its plenitude of power,—how seen 745  
The intricacies now, of shade and shine,  
Oppugnant natures—Right and Wrong, we deem

“Irreconcilable? O eyes of mine,  
Freed now of imperfection, ye avail  
To see the whole sight, nor may uncombine 750

“Henceforth what, erst divided, caused you  
quail—  
So huge the chasm between the false and true,  
The dream and the reality! All hail,

“Day of my soul’s deliverance—day the new,  
The never-ending! What though every shape 755  
Whereon I wreaked my yearning to pursue

“Even to success each semblance of escape  
From my own bounded self to some all-fair  
All-wise external fancy, proved a rape

“Like that old giant’s, feigned of fools—on air, 760  
Not solid flesh? How otherwise? To love—  
That lesson was to learn not here—but there—

## JOCOSERIA

“On earth, not here! ’T is there we learn,—  
there prove

Our parts upon the stuff we needs must spoil,  
Striving at mastery, there bend above 765

“The spoiled clay potsherds, many a year of toil  
Attests the potter tried his hand upon,  
Till sudden he arose, wiped free from soil

“His hand, cried ‘So much for attempt—anon  
Performance! Taught to mould the living vase, 770  
What matter the cracked pitchers dead and gone?’

“Could I impart and could thy mind embrace  
The secret, Tsaddik!” “Secret none to me!”  
Quoth Tsaddik, as the glory on the face

Of Jochanan was quenched. “The truth I see 775  
Of what that excellence of Judah wrote,  
Doughty Halaphta. This a case must be

“Wherein, though the last breath have passed  
the throat,  
So that ‘The man is dead’ we may pronounce,  
Yet is the Ruach—(thus do we denote 780

“The imparted Spirit)—in no haste to bounce  
From its entrusted Body,—some three days  
Lingers ere it relinquish to the pounce

“Of hawk-clawed Death his victim. Further says  
Halaphta, ‘Instances have been, and yet 785  
Again may be, when saints, whose earthly ways

“‘Tend to perfection, very nearly get  
To heaven while still on earth: and, as a fine  
Interval shows where waters pure have met

## JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

“ ‘Waves brackish, in a mixture, sweet with brine, 790  
That ’s neither sea nor river but a taste  
Of both—so meet the earthly and divine

“ ‘And each is either.’ Thus I hold him graced—  
Dying on earth, half inside and half out,  
Wholly in heaven, who knows? My mind embraced 795

“Thy secret, Jochanan, how dare I doubt?  
Follow thy Ruach, let earth, all it can,  
Keep of the leavings!” Thus was brought about

The sepulture of Rabbi Jochanan :  
Thou hast him,—sinner-saint, live-dead, boy-  
man,— 800  
Schip haz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan !

---

NOTE.—This story can have no better authority than that of the treatise, existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing, מִשְׁנַּת שֶׁל רַבִּי מֹשֶׁה, from which I might have helped myself more liberally. Thus, instead of the simple reference to “Moses’ stick,”—but what if I make amends by attempting three illustrations, when some thirty might be composed on the same subject, equally justifying that pithy proverb מִמֶּשֶׁה עֵד מִמֶּשֶׁה לֹא קֵם כְּמִשֶׁה.

### I

Moses the Meek was thirty cubits high,  
The staff he strode with—thirty cubits long :  
And when he leapt, so muscular and strong  
Was Moses that his leaping neared the sky  
By thirty cubits more : we learn thereby  
He reached full ninety cubits—am I wrong?—  
When, in a fight slurred o’er by sacred song,  
With staff outstretched he took a leap to try  
The just dimensions of the giant Og.  
And yet he barely touched—this marvel lacked  
Posterity to crown earth’s catalogue  
Of marvels—barely touched—to be exact—  
The giant’s ankle-bone, remained a frog  
That fain would match an ox in stature : fact !



# JOCOSERIA

## II

And this same fact has met with unbelief!  
How saith a certain traveller? "Young, I chanced  
To come upon an object—if thou canst,  
Guess me its name and nature! 'T was, in brief,  
White, hard, round, hollow, of such length, in chief,  
—And this is what especially enhanced  
My wonder—that it seemed, as I advanced,  
Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf  
Of marvels, this—Posterity! I walked  
From end to end,—four hours walked I, who go  
A goodly pace,—and found—I have not baulked  
Thine expectation, Stranger? Ay or No?  
'T was but Og's thigh-bone, all the while, I stalked  
Alongside of: respect to Moses, though!"

## III

Og's thigh-bone—if ye deem its measure strange,  
Myself can witness to much length of shank  
Even in birds. Upon a water's bank  
Once halting, I was minded to exchange  
Noon heat for cool. Quoth I "On many a grange  
I have seen storks perch—legs both long and lank:  
Yon stork's must touch the bottom of this tank,  
Since on its top doth wet no plume derange  
Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there!" "Do not so!"  
Warned me a voice from heaven. "A man let drop  
His axe into that shallow rivulet—  
As thou accountest—seventy years ago:  
It fell and fell and still without a stop  
Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet."

## NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

NEVER the time and the place  
And the loved one all together !  
This path—how soft to pace !  
This May—what magic weather !  
Where is the loved one's face ?  
In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,  
But the house is narrow, the place is bleak  
Where, outside, rain and wind combine  
With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,  
With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,  
With a malice that marks each word, each sign !  
O enemy sly and serpentine,  
Uncoil thee from the waking man !  
Do I hold the Past  
Thus firm and fast  
Yet doubt if the Future hold I can ?  
This path so soft to pace shall lead  
Thro' the magic of May to herself indeed !  
Or narrow if needs the house must be,  
Outside are the storms and strangers : we—  
Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,  
—I and she !

## PAMBO

SUPPOSE that we part (work done, comes play)  
With a grave tale told in crambo  
—As our hearty sires were wont to say—  
Whereof the hero is Pambo?

Do you happen to know who Pambo was?  
Nor I—but this much have heard of him :  
He entered one day a college-class,  
And asked—was it so absurd of him?—

“ May Pambo learn wisdom ere practise it?  
In wisdom I fain would ground me :  
Since wisdom is centred in Holy Writ,  
Some psalm to the purpose expound me ! ”

“ That psalm,” the Professor smiled, “ shall be  
Untroubled by doubt which dirtieth  
Pellucid streams when an ass like thee  
Would drink there—the Nine-and-thirtieth.

“ Verse first : *I said I will look to my ways  
That I with my tongue offend not.*  
How now? Why stare? Art struck in amaze?  
Stop, stay! The smooth line hath an end knot!

“ He ’s gone !—disgusted my text should prove  
Too easy to need explaining?  
Had he waited, the blockhead might find I move  
To matter that pays remaining ! ”

## PAMBO

Long years went by, when—"Ha, who's this?  
Do I come on the restive scholar  
I had driven to Wisdom's goal, I wis,  
But that he slipped the collar?"

"What? Arms crossed, brow bent, thought-  
immersed?  
A student indeed! Why scruple  
To own that the lesson proposed him first  
Scarce suited so apt a pupil?"

"Come back! From the beggarly elements  
To a more recondite issue  
We pass till we reach, at all events,  
Some point that may puzzle . . . Why 'pish'  
you?"

From the ground looked piteous up the head:  
"Daily and nightly, Master,  
Your pupil plods thro' that text you read,  
Yet gets on never the faster.

"At the self-same stand,—now old, then young!  
*I will look to my ways*—were doing  
As easy as saying!—*that I with my tongue*  
*Offend not*—and 'scape pooh-poohing

"From sage and simple, doctor and dunce?  
Ah, nowise! Still doubts so muddy  
The stream I would drink at once,—but once!  
That—thus I resume my study!"

Brother, brother, I share the blame,  
*Arcades sumus ambo!*  
Darkling, I keep my sunrise-aim,  
Lack not the critic's flambeau,  
And *look to my ways*, yet, much the same,  
*Offend with my tongue*—like Pambo!



## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious.”—Article “Shakespear,” JEREMY COLLIER’S *Historical &c. Dictionary*, 2nd edition, 1701.

“You, Sir, I entertain you for one of my Hundred ; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments : you will say they are Persian : but let them be changed.”—*King Lear*, act iii. sc. 6.

# FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

1884

## PROLOGUE

PRAY, Reader, have you eaten ortolans  
Ever in Italy?

Recall how cooks there cook them : for my plan 's  
To—Lyre with Spit ally.

They pluck the birds,—some dozen luscious lumps,  
Or more or fewer,—

Then roast them, heads by heads and rumps by  
rumps,

Stuck on a skewer.

But first,—and here 's the point I fain would press,  
—Don't think I 'm tattling!—

They interpose, to curb its lusciousness,  
—What, 'twixt each fatling?

First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a toasted  
square :

Then, a strong sage-leaf :

(So we find books with flowers dried here and there  
Lest leaf engage leaf.)

First, food—then, piquancy—and last of all  
Follows the thirdling :

Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your tooth  
must bite

Ere reach the birdling.

Now, were there only crust to crunch, you'd wince:  
Unpalatable!



## PROLOGUE

Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent—so 's a quince :  
    Eat each who 's able !  
But through all three bite boldly—lo, the gust !  
    Flavour—no fixture—  
Flies, permeating flesh and leaf and crust  
    In fine admixture.  
So with your meal, my poem : masticate  
    Sense, sight and song there !  
Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,  
    Nothing found wrong there.  
Whence springs my illustration who can tell ?  
    —The more surprising  
That here eggs, milk, cheese, fruit suffice so well  
    For gormandizing.  
A fancy-freak by contrast born of thee,  
    Delightful Gressoney !  
Who laughest “Take what is, trust what may be !”  
    That 's Life's true lesson,—eh ?

Maison Delapierre,  
Gressoney St. Jean, Val d'Aosta,  
*September 12, '83.*

## THE EAGLE

DERVISH—(though yet un-dervished, call him so  
No less beforehand : while he drudged our way,  
Other his worldly name was : when he wrote  
Those versicles we Persians praise him for,  
—True fairy-work—Ferishtah grew his style)—  
Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one eve,  
And noted on a bough a raven's nest  
Whereof each youngling gaped with callow beak  
Widened by want ; for why ? beneath the tree  
Dead lay the mother-bird. “ A piteous chance !  
“ How shall they 'scape destruction ? ” sighed the  
sage

—Or sage about to be, though simple still.  
Responsive to which doubt, sudden there swooped  
An eagle downward, and behold he bore  
(Great-hearted) in his talons flesh wherewith  
He stayed their craving, then resought the sky.  
“ Ah, foolish, faithless me ! ” the observer smiled,  
“ Who toil and moil to eke out life, when lo  
Providence cares for every hungry mouth ! ”  
To profit by which lesson, home went he,  
And certain days sat musing,—neither meat  
Nor drink would purchase by his handiwork.  
Then,—for his head swam and his limbs grew  
faint,—

Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in dream  
God thus admonished : “ Hast thou marked my  
deed ?

Which part assigned by providence dost judge

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Was meant for man's example? Should he play  
The helpless weakling, or the helpful strength  
That captures prey and saves the perishing?  
Sluggard, arise : work, eat, then feed who lack !”

Waking, “ I have arisen, work I will,  
Eat, and so following. Which lacks food the more,  
Body or soul in me? I starve in soul :  
So may mankind : and since men congregate  
In towns, not woods,—to Ispahan forthwith !”

---

Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,  
Underfoot the moss-tracks,—life and love with these !  
I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers :  
All the long lone Summer-day, that greenwood life of ours !

Rich-pavilioned, rather,—still the world without,—  
Inside—gold-roofed silk-walled silence round about !  
Queen it thou on purple,—I, at watch and ward  
Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy slave, love's guard !

So, for us no world? Let throngs press thee to me !  
Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we !  
Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face !  
God is soul, souls I and thou : with souls should souls have  
place.

## THE MELON-SELLER

GOING his rounds one day in Ispahan,—  
Half-way on Dervishhood, not wholly there,—  
Ferishtah, as he crossed a certain bridge,  
Came startled on a well-remembered face.  
“Can it be? What, turned melon-seller—thou?  
Clad in such sordid garb, thy seat yon step  
Where dogs brush by thee and express contempt?  
Methinks, thy head-gear is some scooped-out gourd!  
Nay, sunk to slicing up, for readier sale,  
One fruit whereof the whole scarce feeds a swine?  
Wast thou the Shah’s Prime Minister, men saw  
Ride on his right-hand while a trumpet blew  
And Persia hailed the Favourite? Yea, twelve  
years

Are past, I judge, since that transcendency,  
And thou didst peculate and art abased;  
No less, twelve years since, thou didst hold in hand  
Persia, couldst halve and quarter, mince its pulp  
As pleased thee, and distribute—melon-like—  
Portions to whoso played the parasite,  
Or suck—thyself—each juicy morsel. How  
Enormous thy abjection,—hell from heaven,  
Made tenfold hell by contrast! Whisper me!  
Dost thou curse God for granting twelve years’  
bliss

Only to prove this day’s the direr lot?”

Whereon the beggar raised a brow, once more  
Luminous and imperial, from the rags.

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“ Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness  
Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints  
A day of woe to the unworthy one,  
Than that the unworthy one, by God's award,  
Tasted joy twelve years long? Or buy a slice,  
Or go to school!”

To school Ferishtah went;  
And, schooling ended, passed from Ispahan  
To Nishapur, that Elburz looks above  
—Where they dig turquoise: there kept school  
himself,

The melon-seller's speech, his stock in trade.  
Some say a certain Jew adduced the word  
Out of their book, it sounds so much the same,

את־הטוב נקבל מאת האלהים

ואת־הרע לא נקבל: In Persian phrase,

“ Shall we receive good at the hand of God  
And evil not receive?” But great wits jump.

---

Wish no word unspoken, want no look away!  
What if words were but mistake, and looks—too sudden, say!  
Be unjust for once, Love! Bear it—well I may!

Do me justice always? Bid my heart—their shrine—  
Render back its store of gifts, old looks and words of thine  
—Oh, so all unjust—the less deserved, the more divine?

## SHAH ABBAS

ANYHOW, once full Dervish, youngsters came  
To gather up his own words, 'neath a rock  
Or else a palm, by pleasant Nishapur.

Said someone, as Ferishtah paused abrupt,  
Reading a certain passage from the roll 5  
Wherein is treated of Lord Ali's life :

“Master, explain this incongruity !  
When I dared question ‘It is beautiful,  
But is it true?’—thy answer was ‘In truth  
Lives beauty.’ I persisting—‘Beauty—yes, 10  
In thy mind and in my mind, every mind  
That apprehends : but outside—so to speak—  
Did beauty live in deed as well as word,  
Was this life lived, was this death died—not  
dreamed ?’

‘Many attested it for fact’ saidst thou. 15

‘Many !’ but mark, Sir ! Half as long ago  
As such things were,—supposing that they were,—  
Reigned great Shah Abbas : he too lived and died  
—How say they ? Why, so strong of arm, of foot  
So swift, he stayed a lion in his leap 20  
On a stag’s haunch,—with one hand grasped the  
stag,

With one struck down the lion : yet, no less,  
Himself, that same day, feasting after sport,  
Perceived a spider drop into his wine,  
Let fall the flagon, died of simple fear. 25  
So all say,—so dost thou say ?”

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“Wherefore not?”

Ferishtah smiled: “though strange, the story  
stands

Clear-chronicled: none tells it otherwise:  
The fact’s eye-witness bore the cup, beside.”

“And dost thou credit one cup-bearer’s tale, 30  
False, very like, and futile certainly,  
Yet hesitate to trust what many tongues  
Combine to testify was beautiful  
In deed as well as word? No fool’s report  
Of lion, stag and spider, but immense 35  
With meaning for mankind,—thy race,—thyself?”

Whereto the Dervish: “First amend, my son,  
Thy faulty nomenclature, call belief  
Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name  
The easy acquiescence of mankind 40  
In matters nowise worth dispute, since life  
Lasts merely the allotted moment. Lo—  
That lion-stag-and-spider tale leaves fixed  
The fact for us that somewhen Abbas reigned,  
Died, somehow slain,—a useful registry,— 45  
Which therefore we—‘believe’? Stand forward,  
thou,

My Yakub, son of Yusuf, son of Zal!  
I advertise thee that our liege, the Shah  
Happily regnant, hath become assured,  
By opportune discovery, that thy sires, 50  
Son by the father upwards, track their line  
To—whom but that same bearer of the cup  
Whose inadvertency was chargeable  
With what therefrom ensued, disgust and death  
To Abbas Shah, the over-nice of soul? 55  
Whence he appoints thee,—such his clemency,—  
Not death, thy due, but just a double tax

## SHAH ABBAS

To pay, on thy particular bed of reeds  
Which flower into the brush that makes a broom  
Fit to sweep ceilings clear of vermin. Sure, 60  
Thou dost believe the story nor dispute  
That punishment should signalize its truth?  
Down therefore with some twelve dinars! Why  
start,

—The stag's way with the lion hard on haunch?  
'Believe the story?'—how thy words throng fast!— 65  
'Who saw this, heard this, said this, wrote down  
this,

That and the other circumstance to prove  
So great a prodigy surprised the world?  
Needs must thou prove me fable can be fact  
Or ere thou coax one piece from out my pouch!' " 70

"There we agree, Sir : neither of us knows,  
Neither accepts that tale on evidence  
Worthy to warrant the large word—belief.  
Now I get near thee! Why didst pause abrupt,  
Disabled by emotion at a tale 75  
Might match—be frank!—for credibility  
The figment of the spider and the cup?  
—To wit, thy roll 's concerning Ali's life,  
Unevidenced—thine own word! Little boots  
Our sympathy with fiction! When I read 80  
The annals and consider of Tahmasp  
And that sweet sun-surpassing star his love,  
I weep like a cut vine-twigg, though aware  
Zurah's sad fate is fiction, since the snake  
He saw devour her,—how could such exist, 85  
Having nine heads? No snake boasts more than  
three!

I weep, then laugh—both actions right alike.  
But thou, Ferishtah, sapiency confessed,  
When at the Day of Judgment God shall ask



## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

'Didst thou believe?'—what wilt thou plead?  
Thy tears?

90

(Nay, they fell fast and stain the parchment still)  
What if thy tears meant love? Love lacking  
ground

—Belief,—avails thee as it would avail  
My own pretence to favour since, forsooth,  
I loved the lady—I, who needs must laugh  
To hear a snake boasts nine heads: they have  
three!"

95

"Thanks for the well-timed help that's born,  
behold,

Out of thy words, my son,—belief and love!

Hast heard of Ishak son of Absal? Ay,

The very same we heard of, ten years since,

100

Slain in the wars: he comes back safe and sound,—

Though twenty soldiers saw him die at Yezdt,—

Just as a single mule-and-baggage boy

Declared 't was like he some day would,—for why?

The twenty soldiers lied, he saw him stout,

105

Cured of all wounds at once by smear of salve,

A Mubid's manufacture: such the tale.

Now, when his pair of sons were thus apprised

Effect was twofold on them. 'Hail!' crowed This:

'Dearer the news than dayspring after night!

110

The cure-reporting youngster warrants me

Our father shall make glad our eyes once more,

For whom, had outpoured life of mine sufficed

To bring him back, free broached were every vein!

'Avaunt, delusive tale-concocter, news

115

Cruel as meteor simulating dawn!'

Whimpered the other: 'Who believes this boy

Must disbelieve his twenty seniors: no,

Return our father shall not! Might my death

Purchase his life, how promptly would the dole

120

## SHAH ABBAS

Be paid as due ! ' Well, ten years pass,—aha,  
Ishak is marching homeward,—doubts, not he,  
Are dead and done with ! So, our townsfolk straight  
Must take on them to counsel. ' Go thou gay,  
Welcome thy father, thou of ready faith ! 125  
Hide thee, contrariwise, thou faithless one,  
Expect paternal frowning, blame and blows ! '  
So do our townsfolk counsel : dost demur ? "

" Ferishtah like those simpletons—at loss  
In what is plain as pikestaff ? Pish ! Suppose 130  
The trustful son had sighed ' So much the worse !  
Returning means—retaking heritage  
Enjoyed these ten years, who should say me nay ? '  
How would such trust reward him ? Trustlessness  
—O' the other hand—were what procured most  
praise 135  
To him who judged return impossible,  
Yet hated heritage procured thereby.  
A fool were Ishak if he failed to prize  
Mere head's work less than heart's work : no  
fool he ! '

" Is God less wise ? Resume the roll ! " They did. 140

---

You groped your way across my room i' the dear dark dead of  
night ;

At each fresh step a stumble was : but, once your lamp alight,  
Easy and plain you walked again : so soon all wrong grew right !

What lay on floor to trip your foot ? Each object, late awry,  
Looked fitly placed, nor proved offence to footing free—for why ?  
The lamp showed all, discordant late, grown simple symmetry.

Be love your light and trust your guide, with these explore my  
heart !

No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands and souls apart !  
Since rooms and hearts are furnished so,—light shows you,—needs  
love start ?

## THE FAMILY

A CERTAIN neighbour lying sick to death,  
Ferishtah grieved beneath a palm-tree, whence  
He rose at peace : whereat objected one  
“Gudarz our friend gasps in extremity.  
Sure, thou art ignorant how close at hand  
Death presses, or the cloud, which fouled so late  
Thy face, had deepened down not lightened off.”

“I judge there will be respite, for I prayed.”

“Sir, let me understand, of charity !  
Yestereve, what was thine admonishment ?  
‘All-wise, all-good, all-mighty—God is such !’  
How then should man, the all-unworthy, dare  
Propose to set aside a thing ordained ?  
To pray means—substitute man’s will for God’s :  
Two best wills cannot be : by consequence,  
What is man bound to but—assent, say I ?  
Rather to rapture of thanksgiving ; since  
That which seems worst to man to God is best,  
So, because God ordains it, best to man.  
Yet man—the foolish, weak and wicked—prays !  
Urges ‘My best were better, didst Thou know’ !”

“List to a tale. A worthy householder  
Of Shiraz had three sons, beside a spouse  
Whom, cutting gourds, a serpent bit, whereon  
The offended limb swelled black from foot to fork.  
The husband called in aid a leech renowned

## THE FAMILY

World-wide, confessed the lord of surgery,  
And bade him dictate—who forthwith declared  
‘Sole remedy is amputation.’ Straight  
The husband sighed ‘Thou knowest : be it so !’  
His three sons heard their mother sentenced :  
‘Pause !’

Outbroke the elder : ‘Be precipitate  
Nowise, I pray thee ! Take some gentler way,  
Thou sage of much resource ! I will not doubt  
But science still may save foot, leg and thigh !’  
The next in age snapped petulant : ‘Too rash !  
No reason for this maiming ! What, Sir Leech,  
Our parent limps henceforward while we leap ?  
Shame on thee ! Save the limb thou must and  
shalt !’

‘Shame on yourselves, ye bold ones !’ followed up  
The brisk third brother, youngest, pertest too :  
‘The leech knows all things, we are ignorant ;  
What he proposes, gratefully accept !  
For me, had I some unguent bound to heal  
Hurts in a twinkling, hardly would I dare  
Essay its virtue and so cross the sage  
By cure his skill pronounces folly. Quick !  
No waiting longer ! There the patient lies :  
Out then with implements and operate !’ ”

“Ah, the young devil !”

“Why, his reason chimed  
Right with the Hakim’s.”

“Hakim’s, ay—but chit’s ?  
How ? what the skilled eye saw and judged of  
weight  
To overbear a heavy consequence,  
That—shall a sciolist affect to see ?

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

All he saw—that is, all such oaf should see,  
Was just the mother's suffering."

"In my tale,

Be God the Hakim : in the husband's case,  
Call ready acquiescence—aptitude  
Angelic, understanding swift and sure :  
Call the first son—a wise humanity,  
Slow to conceive but duteous to adopt :  
See in the second son—humanity,  
Wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but kind.  
Last comes the cackler of the brood, our chit  
Who, aping wisdom all beyond his years,  
Thinks to discard humanity itself :  
Fares like the beast which should affect to fly  
Because a bird with wings may spurn the ground,  
So, missing heaven and losing earth—drops how  
But hell-ward ? No, be man and nothing more—  
Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,  
And craves and deprecates, and loves, and loathes,  
And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes  
And show God granted most, denying all."

---

Man I am and man would be, Love—merest man and nothing  
more.

Bid me seem no other ! Eagles boast of pinions—let them soar !  
I may put forth angel's plumage, once unmanned, but not before.

Now on earth, to stand suffices,—nay, if kneeling serves, to kneel :  
Here you front me, here I find the all of heaven that earth can  
feel :

Sense looks straight,—not over, under,—perfect sees beyond  
appeal.

Good you are and wise, full circle: what to me were more outside ?  
Wiser wisdom, better goodness ? Ah, such want the angel's wide  
Sense to take and hold and keep them ! Mine at least has never  
tried.

## THE SUN

“AND what might that bold man’s announcement  
be”—

Ferishtah questioned—“which so moved thine ire  
That thou didst curse, nay, cuff and kick—in short,  
Confute the announcer? Wipe those drops away  
Which start afresh upon thy face at mere  
Mention of such enormity : now, speak !” 5

“He scrupled not to say—(thou warrantest,  
O patient Sir, that I unblamed repeat  
Abominable words which blister tongue?)  
God once assumed on earth a human shape : 10  
(Lo, I have spitten !) Dared I ask the grace,  
Fain would I hear, of thy subtility,  
From out what hole in man’s corrupted heart  
Creeps such a maggot : fancies verminous  
Breed in the clots there, but a monster born 15  
Of pride and folly like this pest—thyself  
Only canst trace to egg-shell it hath chipped.”

The sun rode high. “During our ignorance”—  
Began Ferishtah—“folk esteemed as God  
Yon orb : for argument, suppose him so,— 20  
Be it the symbol, not the symbolized,  
I and thou safelier take upon our lips.  
Accordingly, yon orb that we adore  
—What is he? Author of all light and life :  
Such one must needs be somewhere : this is he. 25  
Like what? If I may trust my human eyes,

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

A ball composed of spirit-fire, whence springs  
—What, from this ball, my arms could circle round?  
All I enjoy on earth. By consequence,  
Inspiring me with—what? Why, love and praise. 30  
I eat a palatable fig—there 's love  
In little : who first planted what I pluck,  
Obtains my little praise, too : more of both  
Keeps due proportion with more cause for each :  
So, more and ever more, till most of all 35  
Completes experience, and the orb, descried  
Ultimate giver of all good, perforce  
Gathers unto himself all love, all praise,  
Is worshipped—which means loved and praised  
at height.

Back to the first good : 't was the gardener gave 40  
Occasion to my palate's pleasure : grace,  
Plain on his part, demanded thanks on mine.  
Go up above this giver,—step by step,  
Gain a conception of what—(how and why,  
Matters not now)—occasioned him to give, 45  
Appointed him the gardener of the ground,—  
I mount by just progression slow and sure  
To some prime giver—here assumed yon orb—  
Who takes my worship. Whom have I in mind,  
Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like 50  
Howe'er above me? Man, I say—how else,  
I being man who worship? Here 's my hand  
Lifts first a mustard-seed, then weight on weight  
Greater and ever greater, till at last  
It lifts a melon, I suppose, then stops— 55  
Hand-strength expended wholly : so, my love  
First lauds the gardener for the fig his gift,  
Then, looking higher, loves and lauds still more,  
Who hires the ground, who owns the ground,  
Sheikh, Shah,

On and away, away and ever on, 60

## THE SUN

Till, at the last, it loves and lauds the orb  
Ultimate cause of all to laud and love.  
Where is the break, the change of quality  
In hand's power, soul's impulsion? Gift was grace,  
The greatest as the smallest. Had I stopped 65  
Anywhere in the scale, stayed love and praise  
As so far only fit to follow gift,  
Saying 'I thanked the gardener for his fig,  
But now that, lo, the Shah has filled my purse  
With tomans which avail to purchase me 70  
A fig-tree forest, shall I pay the same  
With love and praise, the gardener's proper fee?'  
Justly would whoso bears a brain object  
'Giving is giving, gift claims gift's return,  
Do thou thine own part, therefore : let the Shah 75  
Ask more from who has more to pay.' Perchance  
He gave me from his treasure less by much  
Than the soil's servant : let that be ! My part  
Is plain—to meet and match the gift and gift  
With love and love, with praise and praise, till both 80  
Cry 'All of us is thine, we can no more !'  
So shall I do man's utmost—man to man :  
For as our liege the Shah's sublime estate  
Merely enhaloes, leaves him man the same,  
So must I count that orb I call a fire 85  
(Keep to the language of our ignorance)  
Something that 's fire and more beside. Mere fire  
—Is it a force which, giving, knows it gives,  
And wherefore, so may look for love and praise  
From me, fire's like so far, however less 90  
In all beside ? Prime cause this fire shall be,  
Uncaused, all-causing : hence begin the gifts,  
Thither must go my love and praise—to what ?  
Fire ? Symbol fitly serves the symbolized  
Herein,—that this same object of my thanks, 95  
While to my mind nowise conceivable



## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Except as mind no less than fire, refutes  
Next moment mind's conception : fire is fire—  
While what I needs must thank, must needs include  
Purpose with power,—humanity like mine, 100  
Imagined, for the dear necessity,  
One moment in an object which the next  
Confesses unimaginable. Power !  
—What need of will, then? nought opposes power :  
Why, purpose? any change must be for worse : 105  
And what occasion for beneficence  
When all that is, so is and so must be ?  
Best being best now, change were for the worse.  
Accordingly discard these qualities  
Proper to imperfection, take for type 110  
Mere fire, eject the man, retain the orb,—  
The perfect and, so, inconceivable,—  
And what remains to love and praise? A stone  
Fair-coloured proves a solace to my eye,  
Rolled by my tongue brings moisture curing drouth, 115  
And struck by steel emits a useful spark :  
Shall I return it thanks, the insentient thing ?  
No,—man once, man for ever—man in soul  
As man in body : just as this can use  
Its proper senses only, see and hear, 120  
Taste, like or loathe according to its law  
And not another creature's,—even so  
Man's soul is moved by what, if it in turn  
Must move, is kindred soul : receiving good  
—Man's way—must make man's due acknow-  
ledgment, 125  
No other, even while he reasons out  
Plainly enough that, were the man unmanned,  
Made angel of, angelic every way,  
The love and praise that rightly seek and find  
Their man-like object now,—instructed more, 130  
Would go forth idly, air to emptiness.

## THE SUN

Our human flower, sun-ripened, proffers scent  
Though reason prove the sun lacks nose to feed  
On what himself made grateful : flower and man,  
Let each assume that scent and love alike 135  
Being once born, must needs have use! Man's  
part  
Is plain—to send love forth,—astray, perhaps :  
No matter, he has done his part."

"Wherefrom

What is to follow—if I take thy sense—  
But that the sun—the inconceivable 140  
Confessed by man—comprises, all the same,  
Man's every-day conception of himself—  
No less remaining unconceived !"

"Agreed" !

"Yet thou, insisting on the right of man  
To feel as man, not otherwise,—man, bound 145  
By man's conditions neither less nor more,  
Obliged to estimate as fair or foul,  
Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's faculty  
Adjudges such,—how canst thou,—plainly bound  
To take man's truth for truth and only truth,— 150  
Dare to accept, in just one case, as truth  
Falsehood confessed? Flesh simulating fire—  
Our fellow-man whom we his fellows know  
For dust—instinct with fire unknowable!  
Where 's thy man-needed truth—its proof, nay  
print 155  
Of faintest passage on the tablets traced  
By man, termed knowledge? 'T is conceded thee,  
We lack such fancied union—fire with flesh :  
But even so, to lack is not to gain  
Our lack's suppliance : where 's the trace of such 160  
Recorded?"

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“What if such a tracing were?  
If some strange story stood,—whate'er its worth,—  
That the immensely yearned-for, once befell,  
—The sun was flesh once?—(keep the figure!)”

“How?  
An union inconceivable was fact?” 165

“Son, if the stranger have convinced himself  
Fancy is fact—the sun, besides a fire,  
Holds earthly substance somehow fire pervades  
And yet consumes not,—earth, he understands,  
With essence he remains a stranger to,— 170  
Fitlier thou saidst ‘I stand appalled before  
Conception unattainable by me  
Who need it most’—than this—‘What? boast he  
holds

Conviction where I see conviction's need,  
Alas,—and nothing else? then what remains 175  
But that I straightway curse, cuff, kick the fool!’”

---

Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark escapes,  
Fire forgets the kinship, soars till fancy shapes  
Some befitting cradle where the babe had birth—  
Wholly heaven's the product, unallied to earth.  
Splendours recognized as perfect in the star!—  
In our flint their home was, housed as now they are.

## MIHRAB SHAH

Quoth an inquirer, "Praise the Merciful !  
My thumb which yesterday a scorpion nipped—  
(It swelled and blackened)—lo, is sound again !  
By application of a virtuous root  
The burning has abated : that is well : 5  
But now methinks I have a mind to ask,—  
Since this discomfort came of culling herbs  
Nor meaning harm,—why needs a scorpion be ?  
Yea, there began, from when my thumb last  
throbbed,  
Advance in question framing, till I asked 10  
Wherefore should any evil hap to man—  
From ache of flesh to agony of soul—  
Since God's All-mercy mates All-potency ?  
Nay, why permits He evil to Himself—  
Man's sin, accounted such ? Suppose a world 15  
Purged of all pain, with fit inhabitant—  
Man pure of evil in thought, word and deed—  
Were it not well ? Then, wherefore otherwise ?  
Too good result ? But He is wholly good !  
Hard to effect ? Ay, were He impotent ! 20  
Teach me, Ferishtah !"

Said the Dervish : "Friend,  
My chance, escaped to-day, was worse than thine :  
I, as I woke this morning, raised my head,  
Which never tumbled but stuck fast on neck.  
Was not I glad and thankful !"

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“How could head 25  
Tumble from neck, unchopped—inform me first!  
Unless we take Firdausi's tale for truth,  
Who ever heard the like?”

“The like might hap  
By natural law : I let my staff fall thus—  
It goes to ground, I know not why. Suppose, 30  
Whene'er my hold was loosed, it skyward sprang  
As certainly, and all experience proved  
That, just as staves when unsupported sink,  
So, unconfined, they soar?”

“Let such be law—  
Why, a new chapter of sad accidents 35  
Were added to humanity's mischance,  
No doubt at all, and as a man's false step  
Now lays him prone on earth, contrariwise,  
Removal from his shoulder of a weight  
Might start him upwards to perdition. Ay! 40  
But, since such law exists in just thy brain,  
I shall not hesitate to doff my cap  
For fear my head take flight.”

“Nor feel relief  
Finding it firm on shoulder. Tell me, now!  
What were the bond'twixt man and man, dost judge, 45  
Pain once abolished? Come, be true! Our Shah—  
How stands he in thy favour? Why that shrug?  
Is not he lord and ruler?”

“Easily!  
His mother bore him, first of those four wives  
Provided by his father, such his luck : 50  
Since when his business simply was to breathe  
And take each day's new bounty. There he  
stands—

## MIHRAB SHAH

Where else had I stood, were his birth-star mine?  
No, to respect men's power, I needs must see  
Men's bare hands seek, find, grasp and wield the  
sword 55  
Nobody else can brandish! Bless his heart,  
'T is said, he scarcely counts his fingers right!"

"Well, then—his princely doles! from every feast  
Off go the feasted with the dish they ate  
And cup they drank from,—nay, a change besides 60  
Of garments" . . .

"Sir, put case, for service done,—  
Or best, for love's sake,—such and such a slave  
Sold his allowance of sour lentil soup  
To therewith purchase me a pipe-stick,—nay,  
If he, by but one hour, cut short his sleep 65  
To clout my shoe,—that were a sacrifice!"

"All praise his gracious bearing."

"All praise mine—  
Or would praise did they never make approach  
Except on all-fours, crawling till I bade  
'Now that with eyelids thou hast touched the earth, 70  
Come close and have no fear, poor nothingness!'"  
What wonder that the lady-rose I woo  
And palisade about from every wind,  
Holds herself handsomely? The wilding, now,  
Ruffled outside at pleasure of the blast, 75  
That still lifts up with something of a smile  
Its poor attempt at bloom" . . .

"A blameless life,  
Where wrong might revel with impunity—  
Remember that!"

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“The falcon on his fist—  
Reclaimed and trained and belled and beautified 80  
Till she believes herself the Simorgh's match—  
She only deigns destroy the antelope,  
Stoops at no carrion-crow : thou marvest ?”

“So be it, then ! He wakes no love in thee  
For any one of divers attributes 85  
Commonly deemed lovable. All the same,  
I would he were not wasting, slow but sure,  
With that internal ulcer” . . .

“Say'st thou so ?  
How should I guess ? Alack, poor soul ! But  
stay—  
Sure in the reach of art some remedy 90  
Must lie to hand : or if it lurk,—that leech  
Of fame in Tebriz, why not seek his aid ?  
Couldst not thou, Dervish, counsel in the case ?”

“My counsel might be—what imports a pang  
The more or less, which puts an end to one 95  
Odious in spite of every attribute  
Commonly deemed lovable ?”

“Attributes ?  
Faugh !—nay, Ferishtah,—'t is an ulcer, think !  
Attributes, quotha ? Here 's poor flesh and blood,  
Like thine and mine and every man's, a prey 100  
To hell-fire ! Hast thou lost thy wits for once ?”

“Friend, here they are to find and profit by !  
Put pain from out the world, what room were left  
For thanks to God, for love to Man ? Why  
thanks,—  
Except for some escape, whate'er the style, 105

## MIHRAB SHAH

From pain that might be, name it as thou mayst?  
Why love,—when all thy kind, save me, suppose,  
Thy father, and thy son, and . . . well, thy dog,  
To eke the decent number out—we few  
Who happen—like a handful of chance stars 110  
From the unnumbered host—to shine o'erhead  
And lend thee light,—our twinkle all thy store,—  
We only take thy love! Mankind, forsooth?  
Who sympathizes with their general joy  
Foolish as undeserved? But pain—see God's 115  
Wisdom at work!—man's heart is made to judge  
Pain deserved nowhere by the common flesh  
Our birthright,—bad and good deserve alike  
No pain, to human apprehension! Lust,  
Greed, cruelty, injustice, crave (we hold) 120  
Due punishment from somebody, no doubt:  
But ulcer in the midriff! that brings flesh  
Triumphant from the bar whereto arraigned  
Soul quakes with reason. In the eye of God  
Pain may have purpose and be justified: 125  
Man's sense avails to only see, in pain,  
A hateful chance no man but would avert  
Or, failing, needs must pity. Thanks to God  
And love to man,—from man take these away,  
And what is man worth? Therefore, Mihrab Shah, 130  
Tax me my bread and salt twice over, claim  
Laila my daughter for thy sport,—go on!  
Slay my son's self, maintain thy poetry  
Beats mine,—thou meritest a dozen deaths!  
But—ulcer in the stomach,—ah, poor soul, 135  
Try a fig-plaster: may it ease thy pangs!"

---

So, the head aches and the limbs are faint!  
Flesh is a burthen—even to you!  
Can I force a smile with a fancy quaint?  
Why are my ailments none or few?



## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

In the soul of me sits sluggishness :  
Body so strong and will so weak !  
The slave stands fit for the labour—yes,  
But the master's mandate is still to seek.

You, now—what if the outside clay  
Helped, not hindered the inside flame ?  
My dim to-morrow—your plain to-day,  
Yours the achievement, mine the aim ?

So were it rightly, so shall it be !  
Only, while earth we pace together  
For the purpose apportioned you and me,  
Closer we tread for a common tether.

You shall sigh "Wait for his sluggish soul !  
Shame he should lag, not lamed as I !"  
May not I smile "Ungained her goal :  
Body may reach her—by-and-by ?"

## A CAMEL-DRIVER

“How of his fate, the Pilgrims’ soldier-guide  
Condemned” (Ferishtah questioned), “for he slew  
The merchant whom he convoyed with his bales  
—A special treachery?”

“Sir, the proofs were plain :  
Justice was satisfied : between two boards 5  
The rogue was sawn asunder, rightly served.”

“With all wise men’s approval—mine at least.”

“Himself, indeed, confessed as much. ‘I die  
Justly’ (groaned he) ‘through over-greediness  
Which tempted me to rob : but grieve the most 10  
That he who quickened sin at slumber,—ay,  
Prompted and pestered me till thought grew  
deed,—

The same is fled to Syria and is safe,  
Laughing at me thus left to pay for both.  
My comfort is that God reserves for him 15  
Hell’s hottest’ . . .”

“Idle words.”

“Enlighten me !  
Wherefore so idle ? Punishment by man  
Has thy assent,—the word is on thy lips.  
By parity of reason, punishment  
By God should likelier win thy thanks and praise.” 20

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“Man acts as man must : God, as God beseems.  
A camel-driver, when his beast will bite,  
Thumps her athwart the muzzle : why ?”

“How else  
Instruct the creature—mouths should munch, not  
bite ?”

“True, he is man, knows but man's trick to teach. 25  
Suppose some plain word, told her first of all,  
Had hindered any biting ?”

“Find him such,  
And fit the beast with understanding first !  
No understanding animals like Rakhsh  
Nowadays, Master ! Till they breed on earth, 30  
For teaching—blows must serve.”

“Who deals the blow—  
What if by some rare method,—magic, say,—  
He saw into the biter's very soul,  
And knew the fault was so repented of  
It could not happen twice ?”

“That 's something : still, 35  
I hear, methinks, the driver say ‘No less  
Take thy fault's due ! Those long-necked sisters,  
see,  
Lean all a-stretch to know if biting meets  
Punishment or enjoys impunity.  
For their sakes—thwack !’”

“The journey home at end, 40  
The solitary beast safe-stabled now,  
In comes the driver to avenge a wrong  
Suffered from six months since,—apparently

## A CAMEL-DRIVER

With patience, nay, approval : when the jaws  
Met i' the small of the arm, ' Ha, Ladykin, 45  
Still at thy frolics, girl of gold ? ' laughed he :  
' Eat flesh ? Rye-grass content thee rather with,  
Whereof accept a bundle ! ' Now,—what change !  
Laughter by no means ! Now 't is ' Fiend, thy  
frisk  
Was fit to find thee provender, didst judge ? 50  
Behold this red-hot twy-prong, thus I stick  
To hiss i' the soft of thee ! ' "

“ Behold ? behold  
A crazy noddle, rather ! Sure the brute  
Might wellnigh have plain speech coaxed out of  
tongue,  
And grow as voluble as Rakhsh himself 55  
At such mad outrage. ' Could I take thy mind,  
Guess thy desire ? If biting was offence  
Wherefore the rye-grass bundle, why each day's  
Patting and petting, but to intimate  
My playsomeness had pleased thee ? Thou en-  
dowed 60  
With reason, truly ! ' "

“ Reason aims to raise  
Some makeshift scaffold-vantage midway, whence  
Man dares, for life's brief moment, peer below :  
But ape omniscience ? Nay ! The ladder lent  
To climb by, step and step, until we reach 65  
The little foothold-rise allowed mankind  
To mount on and thence guess the sun's survey—  
Shall this avail to show us world-wide truth  
Stretched for the sun's descrying ? Reason bids  
' Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all 70  
Or last of all, with blows if blows must be,—  
How else accomplish teaching ? ' Reason adds

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

' Before man's First, and after man's poor Last,  
God operated and will operate.'  
—Process of which man merely knows this much,— 75  
That nowise it resembles man's at all,  
Teaching or punishing."

" It follows, then,  
That any malefactor I would smite  
With God's allowance, God himself will spare  
Presumably. No scapegrace? Then, rejoice 80  
Thou snatch-grace safe in Syria !"

" Friend, such view  
Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.  
Man lumps his kind i' the mass : God singles thence  
Unit by unit. Thou and God exist—  
So think !—for certain : think the mass—man-  
kind— 85  
Disparts, disperses, leaves thyself alone !  
Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee,—  
Thee and no other,—stand or fall by them !  
That is the part for thee : regard all else  
For what it may be—Time's illusion. This 90  
Be sure of—ignorance that sins, is safe.  
No punishment like knowledge ! Instance, now !  
My father's choicest treasure was a book  
Wherein he, day by day and year by year,  
Recorded gains of wisdom for my sake 95  
When I should grow to manhood. While a child,  
Coming upon the casket where it lay  
Unguarded,—what did I but toss the thing  
Into a fire to make more flame therewith,  
Meaning no harm ? So acts man three-years old ! 100  
I grieve now at my loss by witlessness,  
But guilt was none to punish. Man mature—  
Each word of his I lightly held, each look

## A CAMEL-DRIVER

I turned from—wish that wished in vain—nay, will  
That willed and yet went all to waste—'t is these 105  
Rankle like fire. Forgiveness? rather grant  
Forgetfulness! The past is past and lost.  
However near I stand in his regard,  
So much the nearer had I stood by steps  
Offered the feet which rashly spurned their help. 110  
That I call Hell; why further punishment?"

---

When I vexed you and you chid me,  
And I owned my fault and turned  
My cheek the way you bid me,  
And confessed the blow well earned,—

My comfort all the while was  
—Fault was faulty—near, not quite!  
Do you wonder why the smile was?  
O'erpunished wrong grew right.

But faults you ne'er suspected,  
Nay, praised, no faults at all,—  
Those would you had detected—  
Crushed eggs whence snakes could crawl!

## TWO CAMELS

QUOTH one : "Sir, solve a scruple ! No true sage  
I hear of, but instructs his scholar thus :  
'Wouldst thou be wise ? Then mortify thyself !  
Baulk of its craving every bestial sense !  
Say "If I relish melons—so do swine !" 5  
Horse, ass and mule consume their provender  
Nor leave a pea-pod : fasting feeds the soul."'  
Thus they admonish : while thyself, I note,  
Eatest thy ration with an appetite,  
Nor fallest foul of whoso licks his lips 10  
And sighs—"Well-saffroned was that barley-soup !"  
Can wisdom co-exist with—gorge-and-swill,  
I say not,—simply sensual preference  
For this or that fantastic meat and drink ?  
Moreover, wind blows sharper than its wont 15  
This morning, and thou hast already donned  
Thy sheepskin over-garment : sure the sage  
Is busied with conceits that soar above  
A petty change of season and its chance  
Of causing ordinary flesh to sneeze ? 20  
I always thought, Sir" . . .

"Son," Ferishtah said,  
"Truth ought to seem as never thought before.  
How if I give it birth in parable ?  
A neighbour owns two camels, beasts of price  
And promise, destined each to go, next week, 25  
Swiftly and surely with his merchandise  
From Nishapur to Sebzevar, no truce

## TWO CAMELS

To tramp, but travel, spite of sands and drouth,  
In days so many, lest they miss the Fair.  
Each falls to meditation o'er his crib 30  
Piled high with provender before the start.  
Quoth this : ' My soul is set on winning praise  
From goodman lord and master,—hump to hoof,  
I dedicate me to his service. How ?  
Grass, purslane, lupines and I know not what, 35  
Crammed in my manger ? Ha, I see—I see !  
No, master, spare thy money ! I shall trudge  
The distance and yet cost thee not a doit  
Beyond my supper on this mouldy bran.'  
' Be magnified, O master, for the meal 40  
So opportunely liberal ! ' quoth that.  
' What use of strength in me but to surmount  
Sands and simooms, and bend beneath thy bales  
No knee until I reach the glad bazaar ?  
Thus I do justice to thy fare : no sprig 45  
Of toothsome chervil must I leave unchewed !  
Too bitterly should I reproach myself  
Did I sink down in sight of Sebzevar,  
Remembering how the merest mouthful more  
Had heartened me to manage yet a mile ! ' 50  
And so it proved : the too-abstemious brute  
Midway broke down, his pack rejoiced the thieves,  
His carcass fed the vultures : not so he  
The wisely thankful, who, good market-drudge,  
Let down his lading in the market-place, 55  
No damage to a single pack. Which beast,  
Think ye, had praise and patting and a brand  
Of good-and-faithful-servant fixed on flank ?  
So, with thy squeamish scruple. What imports  
Fasting or feasting ? Do thy day's work, dare 60  
Refuse no help thereto, since help refused  
Is hindrance sought and found. Win but the  
race—



## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Who shall object 'He tossed three wine cups off,  
And, just at starting, Lilith kissed his lips'?

"More soberly,—consider this, my Son ! 65  
 Put case I never have myself enjoyed,  
 Known by experience what enjoyment means,  
 How shall I—share enjoyment?—no, indeed!—  
 Supply it to my fellows,—ignorant,  
 As so I should be of the thing they crave, 70  
 How it affects them, works for good or ill.  
 Style my enjoyment self-indulgence—sin—  
 Why should I labour to infect my kind  
 With sin's occasion, bid them too enjoy,  
 Who else might neither catch nor give again 75  
 Joy's plague, but live in righteous misery?  
 Just as I cannot, till myself convinced,  
 Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy  
 Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself.  
 Renounce joy for my fellows' sake? That's joy 80  
 Beyond joy; but renounced for mine, not theirs?  
 Why, the physician called to help the sick,  
 Cries 'Let me, first of all, discard my health!'  
 No, Son: the richness hearted in such joy  
 Is in the knowing what are gifts we give, 85  
 Not in a vain endeavour not to know!  
 Therefore, desire joy and thank God for it!  
 The Adversary said,—a Jew reports,—  
 :החנם רא אוב אלהים  
 In Persian phrase, 'Does Job fear God for nought?' 90  
 Job's creatureship is not abjured, thou fool!  
 He nowise isolates himself and plays  
 The independent equal, owns no more  
 Than himself gave himself, so why thank God?  
 A proper speech were this מאלהים 95  
 'Equals we are, Job, labour for thyself,  
 Nor bid me help thee: bear, as best flesh may,

## TWO CAMELS

Pains I inflict not nor avail to cure :  
Beg of me nothing thou thyself mayst win  
By work, or waive with magnanimity,  
Since we are peers acknowledged,—scarcely peers, 100  
Had I implanted any want of thine  
Only my power could meet and gratify.  
No : rather hear, at man's indifference—  
'Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear  
Hungry for music, and direct thine eye 105  
To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,  
Unless I meant thee to beseech me play?'"

---

Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder  
—Simple dust it seemed—and half-unstop a phial :  
—Outdropped harmless dew. "Mixed nothings make"—quoth  
he—

"Something!" So they did : a thunderclap, but louder—  
Lightning-flash, but fiercer—put spectators' nerves to trial :  
Sure enough, we learned what was, imagined what might be.

Had I no experience how a lip's mere tremble,  
Look's half hesitation, cheek's just change of colour,  
These effect a heartquake,—how should I conceive  
What a heaven there may be? Let it but resemble  
Earth myself have known! No bliss that's finer, fuller,  
Only—bliss that lasts, they say, and fain would I believe.

## CHERRIES

“WHAT, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal :  
Cherries so ripe already? Eat apace !  
I recollect thy lesson yesterday.  
Yet—thanks, Sir, for thy leave to interrupt ” . . .

“ Friend, I have finished my repast, thank God ! ” 5

“ There now, thy thanks for breaking fast on fruit!—  
Thanks being praise, or tantamount thereto.  
Prithee consider, have not things degree,  
Lofty and low? Are things not great and small,  
Thence claiming praise and wonder more or less? 10  
Shall we confuse them, with thy warrant too,  
Whose doctrine otherwise begins and ends  
With just this precept ‘ Never faith enough  
In man as weakness, God as potency ’ ?  
When I would pay soul’s tribute to that same, 15  
Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars  
Attest my praise of the All-mighty One?  
What are man’s puny members and as mean  
Requirements weighed with Star-King Mushtari?  
There is the marvel ! ”

“ Not to man—that ’s me. 20  
List to what happened late, in fact or dream.  
A certain stranger, bound from far away,  
Still the Shah’s subject, found himself before  
Ispahan palace-gate. As duty bade,  
He enters in the courts, will, if he may, 25

## CHERRIES

See so much glory as befits a slave  
Who only comes, of mind to testify  
How great and good is shown our lord the Shah.  
In he walks, round he casts his eye about,  
Looks up and down, admires to heart's content, 30  
Ascends the gallery, tries door and door,  
None says his reverence nay : peeps in at each,  
Wonders at all the unimagined use,  
Gold here and jewels there,—so vast, that hall—  
So perfect yon pavilion !—lamps above 35  
Bidding look up from luxuries below,—  
Evermore wonder topping wonder,—last—  
Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,  
A nest-like little chamber, with his name,  
His own, yea, his and no mistake at all, 40  
Plain o'er the entry : what, and he descries  
Just those arrangements inside,—oh, the care !—  
Suited to soul and body both,—so snug  
The cushion—nay, the pipe-stand furnished so !  
Whereat he cries aloud,—what think'st thou, Friend? 45  
'That these my slippers should be just my choice,  
Even to the colour that I most affect,  
Is nothing : ah, that lamp, the central sun,  
What must it light within its minaret  
I scarce dare guess the good of ! Who lives there? 50  
That let me wonder at,—no slipper-toys  
Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks them—  
thus !'

“Never enough faith in omnipotence,—  
Never too much, by parity, of faith  
In impuissance, man's—which turns to strength 55  
When once acknowledged weakness every way.  
How ? Hear the teaching of another tale.

“Two men once owed the Shah a mighty sum,

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Beggars they both were: this one crossed his arms  
And bowed his head,—‘whereof,’—sighed he,—  
‘each hair

60

Proved it a jewel, how the host’s amount  
Were idly strewn for payment at thy feet!’

‘Lord, here they lie, my havings poor and scant!  
All of the berries on my currant-bush,

65

What roots of garlic have escaped the mice,  
And some five pippins from the seedling tree,—

Would they were half-a-dozen! anyhow,  
Accept my all, poor beggar that I am!’

‘Received in full of all demands!’ smiled back  
The apportioner of every lot of ground

70

From inch to acre. Littleness of love

Befits the littleness of loving thing.

What if he boasted ‘Seeing I am great,  
Great must my corresponding tribute be?’

Mushtari,—well, suppose him seven times seven  
The sun’s superior, proved so by some sage :

75

Am I that sage? To me his twinkle blue

Is all I know of him and thank him for,

And therefore I have put the same in verse—

‘Like yon blue twinkle, twink’s thine eye, my Love!’ 80

“Neither shalt thou be troubled overmuch

Because thy offering,—littleness itself,—

Is lessened by admixture sad and strange

Of mere man’s-motives,—praise with fear, and love

With looking after that same love’s reward.

85

Alas, Friend, what was free from this alloy,—

Some smatch thereof,—in best and purest love

Proffered thy earthly father? Dust thou art,

Dust shalt be to the end. Thy father took

The dust, and kindly called the handful—gold,

90

Nor cared to count what sparkled here and there,  
Sagely unanalytic. Thank, praise, love

## CHERRIES

(Sum up thus) for the lowest favours first,  
The commonest of comforts ! aught beside  
Very omnipotence had overlooked 95  
Such needs, arranging for thy little life.  
Nor waste thy power of love in wonderment  
At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoiled  
By breath of word. That this last cherry soothes  
A roughness of my palate, that I know : 100  
His Maker knows why Mushtari was made."

---

Verse-making was least of my virtues : I viewed with despair  
Wealth that never yet was but might be—all that verse-making  
were  
If the life would but lengthen to wish, let the mind be laid bare.  
So I said "To do little is bad, to do nothing is worse"—  
And made verse.

Love-making,—how simple a matter ! No depths to explore,  
No heights in a life to ascend ! No disheartening Before,  
No affrighting Hereafter,—love now will be love evermore.  
So I felt "To keep silence were folly :"—all language above,  
I made love.

## PLOT-CULTURE

“Ay, but, Ferishtah,”—a disciple smirked,—  
“That verse of thine ‘How twink’s thine eye, my  
Love,

Blue as yon star-beam!’ much arrides myself  
Who haply may obtain a kiss therewith  
This eve from Laila where the palms abound—  
My youth, my warrant—so the palms be close!  
Suppose when thou art earnest in discourse  
Concerning high and holy things,—abrupt  
I out with—‘Laila’s lip, how honey-sweet!’—  
What say’st thou, were it scandalous or no?  
I feel thy shoe sent flying at my mouth  
For daring—prodigy of impudence—  
Publish what, secret, were permissible.  
Well,—one slide further in the imagined slough,—  
Knee-deep therein, (respect thy reverence!)—  
Suppose me well aware thy very self  
Stooped prying through the palm-screen, while I  
dared

Solace me with caressings all the same?  
Unutterable, nay—unthinkable,  
Undreamable a deed of shame! Alack,  
How will it fare shouldst thou impress on me  
That certainly an Eye is over all  
And each, to mark the minute’s deed, word, thought,  
As worthy of reward or punishment?  
Shall I permit my sense an Eye-viewed shame,  
Broad daylight perpetration,—so to speak,—  
I had not dared to breathe within the Ear,

## PLOT-CULTURE

With black night's help about me? Yet I stand  
A man, no monster, made of flesh not cloud :  
Why made so, if my making prove offence  
To Maker's eye and ear?"

"Thou wouldst not stand  
Distinctly Man,"—Ferishtah made reply,  
"Not the mere creature,—did no limit-line  
Round thee about, apportion thee thy place  
Clean-cut from out and off the illimitable,—  
Minuteness severed from immensity.  
All of thee for the Maker,—for thyself,  
Workings inside the circle that evolve  
Thine all,—the product of thy cultured plot.  
So much of grain the ground's lord bids thee yield :  
Bring sacks to granary in Autumn ! spare  
Daily intelligence of this manure,  
That compost, how they tend to feed the soil :  
There thou art master sole and absolute  
—Only, remember doomsday ! Twitt'st thou me  
Because I turn away my outraged nose  
Shouldst thou obtrude thereon a shovelful  
Of fertilizing kisses ? Since thy sire  
Wills and obtains thy marriage with the maid,  
Enough ! Be reticent, I counsel thee,  
Nor venture to acquaint him, point by point,  
What he procures thee. Is he so obtuse ?  
Keep thy instruction to thyself ! My ass—  
Only from him expect acknowledgment  
The while he champs my gift, a thistle-bunch,  
How much he loves the largess : of his love  
I only tolerate so much as tells  
By wrinkling nose and inarticulate grunt,  
The meal, that heartens him to do my work,  
Tickles his palate as I meant it should."



## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Not with my Soul, Love!—bid no Soul like mine  
Lap thee around nor leave the poor Sense room!  
Soul,—travel-worn, toil-weary,—would confine  
Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow and gloom,  
Captures from soarings high and divings deep.  
Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memories sleep?  
Take Sense, too—let me love entire and whole—  
Not with my Soul!

Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes between,  
Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!  
No past, no future—so thine arms but screen  
The present from surprise! not there, 't is here—  
Not then, 't is now :—back, memories that intrude!  
Make, Love, the universe our solitude,  
And, over all the rest, oblivion roll—  
Sense quenching Soul!

## A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

“KNOWLEDGE deposed, then!”—groaned whom  
that most grieved

As foolishhest of all the company.

“What, knowledge, man’s distinctive attribute,  
He doffs that crown to emulate an ass  
Because the unknowing long-ears loves at least 5  
Husked lupines, and belike the feeder’s self  
—Whose purpose in the dole what ass divines?”

“Friend,” quoth Ferishtah, “all I seem to know  
Is—I know nothing save that love I can  
Boundlessly, endlessly. My curls were crowned 10  
In youth with knowledge,—off, alas, crown slipped  
Next moment, pushed by better knowledge still  
Which nowise proved more constant: gain, to-day,  
Was toppling loss to-morrow, lay at last  
—Knowledge, the golden?—lacquered ignorance! 15  
As gain—mistrust it! Not as means to gain:  
Lacquer we learn by: cast in fining-pot,  
We learn,—when what seemed ore assayed proves  
dross,—

Surelier true gold’s worth, guess how purity  
I’ the lode were precious could one light on ore 20  
Clarified up to test of crucible.

The prize is in the process: knowledge means  
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat  
That victory is somehow still to reach,  
But love is victory, the prize itself: 25  
Love—trust to! Be rewarded for the trust

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

In trust's mere act. In love success is sure,  
Attainment—no delusion, whatsoe'er  
The prize be : apprehended as a prize,  
A prize it is. Thy child as surely grasps 30  
An orange as he fails to grasp the sun  
Assumed his capture. What if soon he finds  
The foolish fruit unworthy grasping? Joy  
In shape and colour,—that was joy as true—  
Worthy in its degree of love—as grasp 35  
Of sun were, which had singed his hand beside.  
What if he said the orange held no juice  
Since it was not that sun he hoped to suck?  
This constitutes the curse that spoils our life  
And sets man maundering of his misery, 40  
That there 's no meanest atom he obtains  
Of what he counts for knowledge but he cries  
' Hold here,—I have the whole thing,—know, this  
time,  
Nor need search farther!' Whereas, strew his path  
With pleasures, and he scorns them while he stoops : 45  
' This fitly call'st thou pleasure, pick up this  
And praise it, truly? I reserve my thanks  
For something more substantial.' Fool not thus  
In practising with life and its delights!  
Enjoy the present gift, nor wait to know 50  
The unknowable. Enough to say 'I feel  
Love's sure effect, and, being loved, must love  
The love its cause behind,—I can and do!'  
Nor turn to try thy brain-power on the fact,  
(Apart from as it strikes thee, here and now— 55  
Its how and why, i' the future and elsewhere)  
Except to—yet once more, and ever again,  
Confirm thee in thy utter ignorance :  
Assured that, whatsoe'er the quality  
Of love's cause, save that love was caused thereby, 60  
This—nigh upon revelation as it seemed

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Withal I needs must round thee)—knowledge doubt  
Even wherein it seems demonstrable !  
Love,—in the claim for love, that 's gratitude  
For apprehended pleasure, nowise doubt ! 100  
Pay its due tribute,—sure that pleasure is,  
While knowledge may be, at the most. See, now !  
Eating my breakfast, I thanked God.—' For love  
Shown in the cherries' flavour ? Consecrate  
So petty an example ? ' There 's the fault ! 105  
We circumscribe omnipotence. Search sand  
To unearth water : if first handful scooped  
Yields thee a draught, what need of digging down  
Full fifty fathoms deep to find a spring  
Whereof the pulse might deluge half the land ? 110  
Drain the sufficient drop, and praise what checks  
The drouth that glues thy tongue,—what more  
would help.  
A brimful cistern ? Ask the cistern's boon  
When thou wouldst solace camels : in thy case,  
Relish the drop and love the loveable ! " 115

" And what may be unloveable ? "

" Why, hate !  
If out of sand comes sand and nought but sand  
Affect not to be quaffing at mirage,  
Nor nickname pain as pleasure. That, belike,  
Constitutes just the trial of thy wit 120  
And worthiness to gain promotion,—hence,  
Proves the true purpose of thine actual life.  
Thy soul's environment of things perceived,  
Things visible and things invisible,  
Fact, fancy—all was purposed to evolve 125  
This and this only—was thy wit of worth  
To recognize the drop's use, love the same,  
And loyally declare against mirage

## PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

l the world asseverated dust  
to drink? Say, 'what made moist my lip, 130  
knownledged moisture : ' thou art saved !

? The creature and creator stand  
lated so. Consider well !  
wledge all thy faculty, then God  
gnored : love gains him by first leap. 135  
cept the creatureship : ask good  
or : press bold to the tether's end  
o this life's intelligence !  
fend ? ' Will it offend thyself  
issance praying potency, — 140  
beseech that thou command the sun  
at to-morrow—thou, he thinks supreme  
and goodness, why shouldst thou refuse ?  
l, when the child matures, perchance  
were greater if, with wit full-grown, 145  
ling dared to ask for a dinar,  
t the boy cried ' Pluck Sitara down  
her me to play with ! ' 'T is for him  
no bounds to his belief in thee :  
it also is to let her shine 150  
and lonely, so best serving him ! "

---

ask not one least word of praise !  
Words declare your eyes are bright ?  
hat then meant that summer day's  
lence spent in one long gaze ?  
Was my silence wrong or right ?

ords of praise were all to seek !  
Face of you and form of you,  
id they find the praise so weak  
hen my lips just touched your cheek—  
Touch which let my soul come through ?

## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

“Look, I strew beans” . . .

(Ferishtah, we premise,  
Strove this way with a scholar's cavilment  
Who put the peevish question : “Sir, be frank !  
A good thing or a bad thing—Life is which ?  
Shine and shade, happiness and misery 5  
Battle it out there : which force beats, I ask ?  
If I pick beans from out a bushelful—  
This one, this other,—then demand of thee  
What colour names each justly in the main,—  
‘Black’ I expect, and ‘White’ ensues reply : 10  
No hesitation for what speck, spot, splash  
Of either colour's opposite, intrudes  
To modify thy judgment. Well, for beans  
Substitute days,—show, ranged in order, Life—  
Then, tell me its true colour ! Time is short, 15  
Life's days compose a span,—as brief be speech !  
Black I pronounce for, like the Indian Sage,—  
Black—present, past and future, interspersed  
With blanks, no doubt, which simple folk style Good  
Because not Evil : no, indeed ? Forsooth 20  
Black's shade on White is White too ! What's  
the worst  
Of Evil but that, past, it overshades  
The else-exempted present ?—memory,  
We call the plague ! ‘Nay, but our memory fades  
And leaves the past unsullied !’ Does it so ? 25  
Why, straight the purpose of such breathing-space,

## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

Such respite from past ill, grows plain enough !  
What follows on remembrance of the past ?  
Fear of the future ! Life, from birth to death,  
Means—either looking back on harm escaped, 30  
Or looking forward to that harm's return  
With tenfold power of harming. Black, not White,  
Never the whole consummate quietude  
Life should be, troubled by no fear !—nor hope—  
I 'll say, since lamplight dies in noontide, hope 35  
Loses itself in certainty. Such lot  
Man's might have been : I leave the consequence  
To bolder critics of the Primal Cause ;  
Such am not I : but, man—as man I speak :  
Black is the bean-throw : evil is the Life !") 40

“Look, I strew beans”—resumed Ferishtah—  
“beans

Blackish and whitish ; what they figure forth  
Shall be man's sum of moments, bad and good,  
That make up Life,—each moment when he feels  
Pleasure or pain, his poorest fact of sense, 45  
Consciousness anyhow : there 's stand the first ;  
Whence next advance shall be from points to line,  
Singulars to a series, parts to whole,  
And moments to the Life. How look they now,  
Viewed in the large, those little joys and griefs 50  
Ranged duly all a-row at last, like beans  
—These which I strew ? This bean was white,  
this—black,  
Set by itself,—but see if, good and bad  
Each following either in companionship,  
Black have not grown less black and white less  
white, 55  
Till blackish seems but dun, and whitish—grey,  
And the whole line turns—well, or black to thee  
Or white belike to me—no matter which :

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

The main result is—both are modified  
According to our eye's scope, power of range 60  
Before and after. Black dost call this bean?  
What, with a whiteness in its wake, which—see—  
Suffuses half its neighbour?—and, in turn,  
Lowers its pearliness late absolute,  
Frowned upon by the jet which follows hard— 65  
Else wholly white my bean were. Choose a joy!  
Bettered it was by sorrow gone before,  
And sobered somewhat by the shadowy sense  
Of sorrow which came after or might come.  
Joy, sorrow,—by precedence, subsequence— 70  
Either on each, make fusion, mix in Life  
That 's both and neither wholly : grey or dun?  
Dun thou decidest? grey prevails, say I :  
Wherefore? Because my view is wide enough,  
Reaches from first to last nor winks at all : 75  
Motion achieves it : stop short—fast we stick,—  
Probably at the bean that 's blackest.

“Since—  
Son, trust me,—this I know and only this—  
I am in motion, and all things beside  
That circle round my passage through their  
midst,— 80  
Motionless, these are, as regarding me :  
—Which means, myself I solely recognize.  
They too may recognize themselves, not me,  
For aught I know or care : but plain they serve  
This, if no other purpose—stuff to try 85  
And test my power upon of raying light  
And lending hue to all things as I go  
Moonlike through vapour. Mark the flying orb !  
Think'st thou the halo, painted still afresh  
At each new cloud-fleece pierced and passaged  
through, 90



## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

This was and is and will be evermore  
Coloured in permanence? The glory swims  
Girdling the glory-giver, swallowed straight  
By night's abysmal gloom, unglorified  
Behind as erst before the advancer : gloom? 95  
Faced by the onward-faring, see, succeeds  
From the abandoned heaven a next surprise,  
And where 's the gloom now?—silver-smitten  
straight,

One glow and variegation ! So with me,  
Who move and make,—myself,—the black, the  
white, 100  
The good, the bad, of life's environment.  
Stand still! black stays black: start again! there's  
white

Asserts supremacy : the motion 's all  
That colours me my moment : seen as joy?  
I have escaped from sorrow, or that was 105  
Or might have been : as sorrow?—thence shall be  
Escape as certain : white preceded black,  
Black shall give way to white as duly,—so,  
Deepest in black means white most imminent.  
Stand still,—have no before, no after !—life 110  
Proves death, existence grows impossible  
To man like me. 'What else is blessed sleep  
But death, then?' Why, a rapture of release  
From toil,—that's sleep's approach : as certainly,  
The end of sleep means, toil is triumphed o'er : 115  
These round the blank unconsciousness between  
Brightness and brightness, either pushed to blaze  
Just through that blank's interposition. Hence  
The use of things external : man—that's I—  
Practise thereon my power of casting light, 120  
And calling substance,—when the light I cast  
Breaks into colour,—by its proper name  
—A truth and yet a falsity : black, white,

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Names each bean taken from what lay so close  
And threw such tint: pain might mean pain indeed 125  
Seen in the passage past it,—pleasure prove  
No mere delusion while I paused to look,—  
Though what an idle fancy was that fear  
Which overhung and hindered pleasure's hue!  
While how, again, pain's shade enhanced the shine 130  
Of pleasure, else no pleasure! Such effects  
Came of such causes. Passage at an end,—  
Past, present, future pains and pleasures fused  
So that one glance may gather blacks and whites  
Into a life-time,—like my bean-streak there, 135  
Why, white they whirl into, not black—for me!"

"Ay, but for me? The indubitable blacks,  
Immeasurable miseries, here, there  
And everywhere i' the world—world outside thine  
Paled off so opportunely,—body's plague, 140  
Torment of soul,—where 's found thy fellowship  
With wide humanity all round about  
Reeling beneath its burden? What 's despair?  
Behold that man, that woman, child—nay, brute!  
Will any speck of white unblacken life 145  
Splashed, splotched, dyed hell-deep now from end  
to end  
For him or her or it—who knows? Not I!"

"Nor I, Son! 'It' shall stand for bird, beast, fish,  
Reptile, and insect even: take the last!  
There 's the palm-aphis, minute miracle 150  
As wondrous every whit as thou or I:  
Well, and his world 's the palm-frond, there he 's  
born,  
Lives, breeds and dies in that circumference,  
An inch of green for cradle, pasture-ground,  
Purlieu and grave: the palm's use, ask of him! 155

## A BEAN-STRIFE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

‘To furnish these,’ replies his wit : ask thine—  
Who see the heaven above, the earth below,  
Creation everywhere,—these, each and all  
Claim certain recognition from the tree  
For special service rendered branch and bole, 160  
Top-tuft and tap-root :—for thyself, thus seen,  
Palms furnish dates to eat, and leaves to shade,  
—Maybe, thatch huts with,—have another use  
Than strikes the aphid. So with me, my Son !  
I know my own appointed patch i’ the world, 165  
What pleasures me or pains there : all outside—  
How he, she, it, and even thou, Son, live,  
Are pleased or pained, is past conjecture, once  
I pry beneath the semblance,—all that ’s fit,  
To practise with,—reach where the fact may lie 170  
Fathom-deep lower. There ’s the first and last  
Of my philosophy. Blacks blur thy white ?  
Not mine ! The aphid feeds, nor finds his leaf  
Untenable because a lance-thrust, nay,  
Lightning strikes sere a moss-patch close beside, 175  
Where certain other aphids live and love.  
Restriction to his single inch of white,  
That ’s law for him, the aphid : but for me,  
The man, the larger-souled, beside my stretch  
Of blacks and whites, I see a world of woe 180  
All round about me : one such burst of black  
Intolerable o’er the life I count  
White in the main, and, yea—white’s faintest trace  
Were clean abolished once and evermore.  
Thus fare my fellows, swallowed up in gloom 185  
So far as I discern : how far is that ?  
God’s care be God’s ! ’T is mine—to boast no joy  
Unsobered by such sorrows of my kind  
As sully with their shade my life that shines.”

“ Reflected possibilities of pain, 190

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Forsooth, just chasten pleasure ! Pain itself,—  
Fact and not fancy, does not this affect  
The general colour ? ”

“ Here and there a touch  
Taught me, betimes, the artifice of things—  
That all about, external to myself, 195  
Was meant to be suspected,—not revealed  
Demonstrably a cheat,—but half seen through,  
Lest white should rule unchecked along the line :  
Therefore white may not triumph. All the same,  
Of absolute and irretrievable 200  
And all-subduing black,—black's soul of black  
Beyond white's power to disintensify,—  
Of that I saw no sample : such may wreck  
My life and ruin my philosophy  
To-morrow, doubtless : hence the constant shade 205  
Cast on life's shine,—the tremor that intrudes  
When firmest seems my faith in white. Dost ask  
' Who is Ferishtah, hitherto exempt  
From black experience ? Why, if God be just,  
Were sundry fellow-mortals singled out 210  
To undergo experience for his sake,  
Just that the gift of pain, bestowed on them,  
In him might temper to the due degree  
Joy's else-excessive largess ? ' Why, indeed !  
Back are we brought thus to the starting-point— 215  
Man's impotency, God's omnipotence,  
These stop my answer. Aphis that I am,  
How leave my inch-allotment, pass at will  
Into my fellow's liberty of range,  
Enter into his sense of black and white, 220  
As either, seen by me from outside, seems  
Predominatingly the colour ? Life,  
Lived by my fellow, shall I pass into  
And myself live there ? No—no more than pass

## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

From Persia, where in sun since birth I bask 225  
Daily, to some ungracious land afar,  
Told of by travellers, where the might of snow  
Smothers up day, and fluids lose themselves  
Frozen to marble. How I bear the sun,  
Beat though he may unduly, that I know : 230  
How blood once curdled ever creeps again,  
Baffles conjecture : yet since people live  
Somehow, resist a clime would conquer me,  
Somehow provided for their sake must dawn  
Compensative resource. 'No sun, no grapes,— 235  
Then, no subsistence !'—were it wisely said ?  
Or this well-reasoned—'Do I dare feel warmth  
And please my palate here with Persia's vine,  
Though, over-mounts,—to trust the traveller,—  
Snow, feather thick, is falling while I feast ? 240  
What if the cruel winter force his way  
Here also ?' Son, the wise reply were this :  
When cold from over-mounts spikes through and  
through  
Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah,—then,  
Time to look out for shelter—time, at least, 245  
To wring the hands and cry 'No shelter serves !'  
Shelter, of some sort, no experienced chill  
Warrants that I despair to find."

"No less,

Doctors have differed here ; thou say'st thy say ;  
Another man's experience masters thine, 250  
Flat controverted by the sourly-Sage,  
The Indian witness who, with faculty  
Fine as Ferishtah's, found no white at all  
Chequer the world's predominating black,  
No good oust evil from supremacy, 255  
So that Life's best was that it led to death.  
How of his testimony ?"

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

“Son, suppose  
My camel told me : ‘Threescore days and ten  
I traversed hill and dale, yet never found  
Food to stop hunger, drink to stay my drouth ; 260  
Yet, here I stand alive, which take in proof  
That to survive was found impossible !’  
‘Nay, rather take thou, non-surviving beast’  
(Reply were prompt), ‘on flank this thwack of staff  
Nowise affecting flesh that ’s dead and dry ! 265  
Thou wincest ? Take correction twice, amend  
Next time thy nomenclature ! Call white—white !’  
The sourly-Sage, for whom life’s best was death,  
Lived out his seventy years, looked hale, laughed  
loud,  
Liked—above all—his dinner,—lied, in short.” 270

“Lied is a rough phrase : say he fell from truth  
In climbing towards it !—sure less faulty so  
Than had he sat him down and stayed content  
With thy safe orthodoxy, ‘White, all white,  
White everywhere for certain I should see 275  
Did I but understand how white is black,  
As clearersense thanminewould.’ Clearersense,—  
Whose may that be ? Mere human eyes I boast,  
And such distinguish colours in the main,  
However any tongue, that ’s human too, 280  
Please to report the matter. Dost thou blame  
A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,  
Truth at all hazards ? Oh, this false for real,  
This emptiness which feigns solidity,—  
Ever some grey that ’s white, and dun that ’s  
black,— 285  
When shall we rest upon the thing itself  
Not on its semblance ?—Soul—too weak, forsooth,  
To cope with fact—wants fiction everywhere !  
Mine tires of falsehood : truth at any cost !”

## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

“Take one and try conclusions—this, suppose ! 290  
God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful : truth ?  
Take it and rest there. What is man ? Not God :  
None of these absolutes therefore,—yet himself,  
A creature with a creature’s qualities.

Make them agree, these two conceptions ! Each 295  
Abolishes the other. Is man weak,  
Foolish and bad ? He must be Ahriman,  
Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with Good,  
Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole Will,  
Doing a maker’s pleasure—with results 300  
Which—call, the wide world over, ‘what must be’—  
But, from man’s point of view, and only point  
Possible to his powers, call—evidence  
Of goodness, wisdom, strength ? we mock our-  
selves

In all that ’s best of us,—man’s blind but sure 305  
Craving for these in very deed not word,  
Reality and not illusion. Well,—

Since these nowhere exist—nor there where cause  
Must have effect, nor here where craving means  
Craving unfollowed by fit consequence 310  
And full supply, aye sought for, never found—  
These—what are they but man’s own rule of right ?  
A scheme of goodness recognized by man,  
Although by man unrealizable,—

Not God’s with whom to will were to perform : 315  
Nowise performed here, therefore never willed.  
What follows but that God, who could the best,  
Has willed the worst,—while man, with power to  
match

Will with performance, were deservedly  
Hailed the supreme—provided . . . here ’s the  
touch 320

That breaks the bubble . . . this concept of man’s  
Were man’s own work, his birth of heart and brain,

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

His native grace, no alien gift at all.  
The bubble breaks here. Will of man create ?  
No more than this my hand which strewed the beans 325  
Produced them also from its finger-tips.  
Back goes creation to its source, source prime  
And ultimate, the single and the sole."

"How reconcile discordancy,—unite  
Notion and notion—God that only can 330  
Yet does not,—man that would indeed  
But just as surely cannot,—both in one ?  
What help occurs to thy intelligence ?"

"Ah, the beans,—or,—example better yet,—  
A carpet-web I saw once leave the loom 335  
And lie at gorgeous length in Ispahan !  
The weaver plied his work with lengths of silk  
Dyed each to match some jewel as it might,  
And wove them, this by that. 'How comes it,  
friend,'—

(Quoth I)—'that while, apart, this fiery hue, 340  
That watery dimness, either shocks the eye,  
So blinding bright, or else offends again  
By dulness,—yet the two, set each by each,  
Somehow produce a colour born of both,  
A medium profitable to the sight ?' 345

'Such medium is the end whereat I aim,'—  
Answered my craftsman : 'there's no single tinct  
Would satisfy the eye's desire to taste  
The secret of the diamond : join extremes,  
Results a serviceable medium-ghost, 350  
The diamond's simulation. Even so  
I needs must blend the quality of man  
With quality of God, and so assist  
Mere human sight to understand my Life,  
What is, what should be,—understand thereby 355



## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

Wherefore I hate the first and love the last,—  
Understand why things so present themselves  
To me, placed here to prove I understand.  
Thus, from beginning runs the chain to end,  
And binds me plain enough. By consequence, 360  
I bade thee tolerate,—not kick and cuff  
The man who held that natures did in fact  
Blend so, since so thyself must have them blend  
In fancy, if it take a flight so far.”

“A power, confessed past knowledge, nay, past  
thought, 365  
—Thus thought thus known !”

“To know of, think about—  
Is all man’s sum of faculty effects  
When exercised on earth’s least atom, Son !  
What was, what is, what may such atom be ?  
No answer ! Still, what seems it to man’s sense ? 370  
An atom with some certain properties  
Known about, thought of as occasion needs,  
—Man’s—but occasions of the universe ?  
Unthinkable, unknowable to man.  
Yet, since to think and know fire through and  
through 375  
Exceeds man, is the warmth of fire unknown,  
Its uses—are they so unthinkable ?  
Pass from such obvious power to powers unseen,  
Undreamed of save in their sure consequence :  
Take that, we spoke of late, which draws to ground 380  
The staff my hand lets fall : it draws, at least—  
Thus much man thinks and knows, if nothing  
more.”

“Ay, but man puts no mind into such power !  
He neither thanks it, when an apple drops,

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Nor prays it spare his pate while underneath. 385  
Does he thank Summer though it plumped the  
rind?

Why thank the other force—whate'er its name—  
Which gave him teeth to bite and tongue to taste  
And throat to let the pulp pass? Force and force,  
No end of forces! Have they mind like man?" 390

"Suppose thou visit our lord Shalim-Shah,  
Bringing thy tribute as appointed. 'Here  
Come I to pay my due!' Whereat one slave  
Obsequious spreads a carpet for thy foot,  
His fellow offers sweetmeats, while a third 395  
Prepares a pipe: what thanks or praise have they?  
Such as befit prompt service. Gratitude  
Goes past them to the Shah whose gracious nod  
Set all the sweet civility at work;  
But for his ordinance, I much suspect, 400  
My scholar had been left to cool his heels  
Uncarpeted, or warm them—likelier still—  
With bastinado for intrusion. Slaves  
Needs must obey their master: 'force and force,  
No end of forces,' act as bids some force 405  
Supreme o'er all and each: where find that one?  
How recognize him? Simply as thou didst  
The Shah—by reasoning 'Since I feel a debt,  
Behoves me pay the same to one aware  
I have my duty, he his privilege.' 410  
Didst thou expect the slave who charged thy pipe  
Would serve as well to take thy tribute-bag  
And save thee further trouble?"

"Be it so!

The sense within me that I owe a debt  
Assures me—somewhere must be somebody 415  
Ready to take his due. All comes to this—

## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

Where due is, there acceptance follows : find  
Him who accepts the due ! and why look far ?  
Behold thy kindred compass thee about !  
Ere thou wast born and after thou shalt die, 420  
Heroic man stands forth as Shalim-Shah.  
Rustem and Gew, Gudarz and all the rest,  
How come they short of lordship that 's to seek ?  
Dead worthies ! but men live undoubtedly  
Gifted as Sindokht, sage Sulayman's match, 425  
Valiant like Kawah : ay, and while earth lasts  
Such heroes shall abound there—all for thee  
Who profitest by all the present, past,  
And future operation of thy race.  
Why, then, o'erburdened with a debt of thanks, 430  
Look wistful for some hand from out the clouds  
To take it, when, all round, a multitude  
Would ease thee in a trice ? ”

“ Such tendered thanks  
Would tumble back to who craved riddance, Son !  
—Who but my sorry self ? See ! stars are out— 435  
Stars which, unconscious of thy gaze beneath,  
Go glorifying, and glorify thee too  
—Those Seven Thrones, Zurah's beauty, weird  
Parwin !

Whether shall love and praise to stars be paid  
Or—say—some Mubid who, for good to thee 440  
Blind at thy birth, by magic all his own  
Opened thine eyes, and gave the sightless sight,  
Let the stars' glory enter ? Say his charm  
Worked while thyself lay sleeping : as he went  
Thou wakedst : ‘ What a novel sense have I ! 445  
Whom shall I love and praise ? ’ ‘ The stars, each  
orb

Thou standest rapt beneath,’ proposes one :  
‘ Do not they live their life, and please themselves,

## FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

And so please thee? What more is requisite?  
Make thou this answer: 'If indeed no mage 450  
Opened my eyes and worked a miracle,  
Then let the stars thank me who apprehend  
That such an one is white, such other blue!  
But for my apprehension both were blank.  
Cannot I close my eyes and bid my brain 455  
Make whites and blues, conceive without stars'  
help,  
New qualities of colour? were my sight  
Lost or misleading, would yon red—I judge  
A ruby's benefaction—stand for aught  
But green from vulgar glass? Myself appraise 460  
Lustre and lustre; should I overlook  
Fomalhaut and declare some fen-fire king,  
Who shall correct me, lend me eyes he trusts  
No more than I trust mine? My mage for me!  
I never saw him: if he never was, 465  
I am the arbitrator!' No, my Son!  
Let us sink down to thy similitude:  
I eat my apple, relish what is ripe—  
The sunny side, admire its rarity  
Since half the tribe is wrinkled, and the rest 470  
Hide commonly a maggot in the core,—  
And down Zerdusht goes with due smack of lips:  
But—thank an apple? He who made my mouth  
To masticate, my palate to approve,  
My maw to further the concoction—Him 475  
I thank,—but for whose work, the orchard's  
wealth  
Might prove so many gall-nuts—stocks or stones  
For aught that I should think, or know, or care."

## A BEAN-STRIPE : ALSO, APPLE-EATING

“Why from the world,” Ferishtah smiled, “should thanks  
Go to this work of mine? If worthy praise,  
Praised let it be and welcome : as verse ranks,  
So rate my verse : if good therein outweighs  
Aught faulty judged, judge justly ! Justice says :  
Be just to fact, or blaming or approving :  
But—generous? No, nor loving !

“Loving ! what claim to love has work of mine ?  
Concede my life were emptied of its gains  
To furnish forth and fill work’s strict confine,  
Who works so for the world’s sake—he complains  
With cause when hate, not love, rewards his pains.  
I looked beyond the world for truth and beauty :  
Sought, found and did my duty.”

## EPILOGUE

OH, Love—no, Love! All the noise below,  
Love,  
Groanings all and moanings—none of Life I  
lose!

All of Life 's a cry just of weariness and woe,  
Love—

“Hear at least, thou happy one!” How can  
I, Love, but choose?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me  
—Much as when the moon's might frees a  
space from cloud—

Iridescent splendours: gloom—would else con-  
found me—

Barriered off and banished far—bright-edged  
the blackest shroud!

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are  
they, the faces

Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous  
ones of old?

“What”—they smile—“our names, our deeds  
so soon erases

Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies  
enrolled?

“Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe and  
mumming,

So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked  
or whined?

## EPILOGUE

Each of us heard clang God's 'Come!' and each  
was coming :

Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag  
behind !

"How of the field's fortune? That concerned  
our Leader !

Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings  
left and right :

Each as on his sole head, failer or succeeder,  
Lay the blame or lit the praise : no care for  
cowards : fight !"

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth  
that 's under,

Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife  
and strife's success :

All the good and beauty, wonder crowning  
wonder,

Till my heart and soul applaud perfection,  
nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror  
Sudden turns the blood to ice : a chill wind  
disencharms

All the late enchantment ! What if all be error—  
If the halo irised round my head were, Love,  
thine arms ?

Palazzo Giustinian-Recanati, Venice :  
*December 1, 1883.*





PARLEYINGS  
WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY

TO WIT: BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE  
DANIEL BARTOLI  
CHRISTOPHER SMART  
GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON  
FRANCIS FURINI  
GERARD DE LAIRESSE  
AND CHARLES AVISON

INTRODUCED BY  
A DIALOGUE BETWEEN APOLLO AND THE FATES

CONCLUDED BY  
ANOTHER BETWEEN JOHN FUST AND HIS FRIENDS



IN MEMORIAM  
J. MILSAND

OBIIT IV. SEPT. MDCCCLXXXVI

*Absens absentem auditque videtque*



# PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

1887

## APOLLO AND THE FATES

### A PROLOGUE

(Hymn. in Mercurium, v. 559. Eumenides, vv. 693-4, 697-8.  
Alcestis, vv. 12, 33.)

APOLLO

[*From above.*

FLAME at my footfall, Parnassus ! Apollo,  
Breaking a-blaze on thy topmost peak,  
Burns thence, down to the depths—dread hollow—  
Haunt of the Dire Ones. Haste ! They wreak  
Wrath on Admetus whose respite I seek.

5

THE FATES [*Below. Darkness.*

Dragonwise couched in the womb of our Mother,  
Coiled at thy nourishing heart's core, Night !  
Dominant Dreads, we, one by the other,  
Deal to each mortal his dole of light  
On earth—the upper, the glad, the bright.

10

CLOTHO

Even so : thus from my loaded spindle  
Plucking a pinch of the fleece, lo, "Birth"  
Brays from my bronze lip : life I kindle :  
Look, 't is a man ! go, measure on earth  
The minute thy portion, whatever its worth !

15

## APOLLO AND THE FATES

LACHESIS

Woe-purpled, weal-prankt,—if its speed, if it linger,—  
Life's substance and show are determined by me,  
Who, meting out, mixing with sure thumb and  
finger,  
Lead life the due length : is all smoothness and  
glee,  
All tangle and grief? Take the lot, my decree ! 20

ATROPOS

—Which I make an end of : the smooth as the  
tangled  
My shears cut asunder : each snap shrieks  
“One more  
Mortal makes sport for us Moirai who dangled  
The puppet grotesquely till earth's solid floor  
Proved firm he fell through, lost in Nought as  
before.” 25

CLOTHO

I spin thee a thread. Live, Admetus ! Produce  
him !

LACHESIS

Go,—brave, wise, good, happy ! Now chequer  
the thread !  
He is slaved for, yet loved by a god. I unloose  
him  
A goddess-sent plague. He has conquered, is  
wed,  
Men crown him, he stands at the height,—

ATROPOS

He is . . .

APOLLO [*Entering: Light.*

“Dead ?” 30

## A PROLOGUE

Nay, swart spinsters ! So I surprise you  
Making and marring the fortunes of Man ?  
Huddling—no marvel, your enemy eyes you—  
Head by head bat-like, blots under the ban  
Of daylight earth's blessing since time began !

35

### THE FATES

Back to thy blest earth, prying Apollo !  
Shaft upon shaft transpierce with thy beams  
Earth to the centre,—spare but this hollow  
Hewn out of Night's heart, where our mystery  
seems  
Mewed from day's malice : wake earth from her  
dreams !

40

### APOLLO

Crones, 't is your dusk selves I startle from  
slumber :  
Day's god deposes you—queens Night-crowned !  
—Plying your trade in a world ye encumber,  
Fashioning Man's web of life—spun, wound,  
Left the length ye allot till a clip strews the  
ground !

45

Behold I bid truce to your doleful amusement—  
Annulled by a sunbeam !

### THE FATES

Boy, are not we peers ?

### APOLLO

You with the spindle grant birth : whose induce-  
ment  
But yours—with the niggardly digits—endears  
To mankind chance and change, good and evil ?  
Your shears . . .

50

## APOLLO AND THE FATES

### ATROPOS

Ay, mine end the conflict : so much is no fable.  
We spin, draw to length, cut asunder : what then?  
So it was, and so is, and so shall be : art able  
To alter life's law for ephemeral men ?

### APOLLO

Nor able nor willing. To threescore and ten 55  
Extend but the years of Admetus ! Disaster  
O'ertook me, and, banished by Zeus, I became  
A servant to one who forbore me though master :  
True lovers were we. Discontinue your game,  
Let him live whom I loved, then hate on, all the  
same ! 60

### THE FATES

And what if we granted—law-flouter, use-  
trampler—  
His life at the suit of an upstart ? Judge, thou—  
Of joy were it fuller, of span because ampler ?  
For love's sake, not hate's, end Admetus—ay,  
now—  
Not a gray hair on head, nor a wrinkle on brow ! 65  
For, boy, 't is illusion : from thee comes a glimmer  
Transforming to beauty life blank at the best.  
Withdraw—and how looks life at worst, when to  
shimmer  
Succeeds the sure shade, and Man's lot frowns  
—confessed  
Mere blackness chance-brightened ? Whereof  
shall attest 70  
The truth this same mortal, the darling thou stylest,  
Whom love would advantage,—eke out, day by  
day,



## A PROLOGUE

A life which 't is solely thyself reconcilest

Thy friend to endure,—life with hope : take away  
Hope's gleam from Admetus, he spurns it. For,  
say—

75

What 's infancy ? Ignorance, idleness, mischief :

Youth ripens to arrogance, foolishness, greed :  
Age—impotence, churlishness, rancour : call *this*  
chief

Of boons for thy loved one ? Much rather bid  
speed

Our function, let live whom thou hatest indeed ! 80

Persuade thee, bright boy-thing ! Our eld be  
instructive !

### APOLLO

And certes youth owns the experience of age.  
Ye hold then, grave seniors, my beams are pro-  
ductive

—They solely—of good that 's mere semblance,  
engage

Man's eye—gilding evil, Man's true heritage ? 85

### THE FATES

So, even so ! From without,—at due distance

If viewed,—set a-sparkle, reflecting thy rays,—  
Life mimics the sun : but withdraw such assistance,

The counterfeit goes, the reality stays—  
An ice-ball disguised as a fire-orb.

### APOLLO

What craze 90

Possesses the fool then whose fancy conceits him  
As happy ?

# APOLLO AND THE FATES

THE FATES

Man happy?

APOLLO

If otherwise—solve  
This doubt which besets me! What friend ever  
greets him

Except with “Live long as the seasons revolve,”  
Not “Death to thee straightway”? Your doc-  
trines absolve

95

Such hailing from hatred: yet Man should know  
best.

He talks it, and glibly, as life were a load  
Man fain would be rid of: when put to the test,  
He whines “Let it lie, leave me trudging the  
road.

That is rugged so far, but methinks . . .”

THE FATES

Ay, 't is owed 100

To that glamour of thine, he bethinks him “Once  
past

The stony, some patch, nay, a smoothness of  
sward

Awaits my tired foot: life turns easy at last”—

Thy largess so lures him, he looks for reward  
Of the labour and sorrow.

APOLLO

It seems, then—debarred 105

Of illusion—(I needs must acknowledge the plea)  
Man desponds and despairs. Yet,—still further  
to draw

## A PROLOGUE

Due profit from counsel,—suppose there should be  
Some power in himself, some compensative law  
By virtue of which, independently . . .

THE FATES

Faugh ! 110

Strength hid in the weakling !

What bowl-shape hast there,  
Thus laughingly proffered ? A gift to our shrine ?  
Thanks—worsted in argument ! Not so ? Declare  
Its purpose !

APOLLO

I proffer earth's product, not mine.  
Taste, try, and approve Man's invention of—WINE ! 115

THE FATES

We feeding suck honeycombs.

APOLLO

Sustenance meagre !  
Such fare breeds the fumes that show all things  
amiss.  
Quaff wine,—how the spirits rise nimble and eager,  
Unscale the dim eyes ! To Man's cup grant  
one kiss  
Of your lip, then allow—no enchantment like this ! 120

CLOTHO

Unhook wings, unhood brows ! Dost hearken ?

LACHESIS

I listen :  
I see—smell the food these fond mortals prefer  
To our feast, the bee's bounty !

# APOLLO AND THE FATES

ATROPOS

The thing leaps ! But—glisten  
Its best, I withstand it—unless all concur  
In adventure so novel.

APOLLO

Ye drink ?

THE FATES

We demur. 125

APOLLO

Sweet Trine, be indulgent nor scout the contriv-  
ance

Of Man—Bacchus-prompted ! The juice, I up-  
hold,

Illuminates gloom without sunny connivance,

Turnsfearinto hope and makes cowardice bold,—

Touching all that is leadlike in life turns it gold ! 130

THE FATES

Faith foolish as false !

APOLLO

But essay it, soft sisters !

Then mock as ye may. Lift the chalice to lip !

Good : thou next—and thou ! Seems the web, to  
you twisters

Of life's yarn, so worthless ?

CLOTHO

Who guessed that one sip  
Would impart such a lightness of limb ?

LACHESIS

I could skip 135

## A PROLOGUE

In a trice from the pied to the plain in my woof!  
What parts each from either? A hair's breadth,  
no inch.  
Once learn the right method of stepping aloof,  
Though on black next foot falls, firm I fix it,  
nor flinch,  
—Such my trust white succeeds!

ATROPOS

One could live—at a pinch! 140

APOLLO

What, beldames? Earth's yield, by Man's skill,  
can effect  
Such a cure of sick sense that ye spy the relation  
Of evil to good? But drink deeper, correct  
Blar sight more convincingly still! Take your  
station  
Beside me, drain dregs! Now for edification! 145  
Whose gift have ye gulped? Thank not me but  
my brother,  
Blithe Bacchus, our youngest of godships.  
'T was he  
Found all boons to all men, by one god or other  
Already conceded, so judged there must be  
New guerdon to grace the new advent, you see! 150  
Else how would a claim to Man's homage arise?  
The plan layarranged of his mixed woe and weal,  
So disposed—such Zeus' will—with design to make  
wise  
The witless—that false things were mingled with  
real,  
Good with bad: such the lot whereto law set the  
seal.

155

## APOLLO AND THE FATES

Now, human of instinct—since Semele's son,  
Yet minded divinely—since fathered by Zeus,  
With nought Bacchus tampered, undid not things  
done,

Owne'd wisdom anterior, would spare wont and  
use,

Yet change—without shock to old rule—introduce. 160

Regard how your cavern from crag-tip to base  
Frowns sheer, height and depth adamantine,  
one death !

I rouse with a beam the whole rampart, displace  
No splinter—yet see how my flambeau, beneath  
And above, bids this gem wink, that crystal un-  
sheath !

165

Withdraw beam—disclosure once more Night  
forbids you

Of spangle and sparkle—Day's chance-gift,  
surmised

Rock's permanent birthright: my potency rids you  
No longer of darkness, yet light—recognized—  
Proves darkness a mask: day lives on though  
disguised.

170

If Bacchus by wine's aid avail so to fluster

Your sense, that life's fact grows from adverse  
and thwart

To helpful and kindly by means of a cluster—

Mere hand-squeeze, earth's nature sublimed by  
Man's art—

Shall Bacchus claim thanks wherein Zeus has no  
part ?

175

Zeus—wisdom anterior ? No, maids, be admon-  
ished !

If morn's touch at base worked such wonders,  
much more

## A PROLOGUE

Had noontide in absolute glory astonished  
Your den, filled a-top to o'erflowing. I pour  
No such mad confusion. 'T is Man's to explore 180

Up and down, inch by inch, with the taper his  
reason :

No torch, it suffices—held deftly and straight.  
Eyes, purblind at first, feel their way in due season,  
Accept good with bad, till unseemly debate  
Turns concord—despair, acquiescence in fate. 185

Who works this but Zeus? Are not instinct and  
impulse,

Not concept and incept his work through Man's  
soul

On Man's sense? Just as wine ere it reach brain  
must brim pulse,

Zeus' flash stings the mind that speeds body to  
goal,

Bids pause at no part but press on, reach the  
whole. 190

For petty and poor is the part ye envisage

When—(quaff away, cummers!)—ye view, last  
and first,

As evil Man's earthly existence. Come! *Is* age,

*Is* infancy—manhood—so uninterspersed

With good—some faint sprinkle?

CLOTHO

I 'd speak if I durst. 195

APOLLO

Draughts dregward loose tongue-tie.

LACHESIS

I 'd see, did no web

Set eyes somehow winking.

## APOLLO AND THE FATES

APOLLO

Drains-deep lies their purge  
—True collyrium!

ATROPOS

Words, surging at high-tide, soon ebb  
From starved ears.

APOLLO

Drink but down to the source, they resurge.  
Join hands! Yours and yours too! A dance or  
a dirge?

200

CHORUS

Quashed be our quarrel! Sourly and smilingly,  
Bare and gowned, bleached limbs and browned,  
Drive we a dance, three and one, reconcilingly,  
Thanks to the cup where dissension is drowned,  
Defeat proves triumphant and slavery crowned.

205

Infancy? What if the rose-streak of morning  
Pale and depart in a passion of tears?  
Once to have hoped is no matter for scorning!  
Love once—e'en love's disappointment endears!  
A minute's success pays the failure of years.

210

Manhood—the actual? Nay, praise the potential!  
(Bound upon bound, foot it around!)  
What *is*? No, what *may* be—sing! that's Man's  
essential!

(Ramp, tramp, stamp and compound  
Fancy with fact—the lost secret is found!)

215

Age? Why, fear ends there: the contest con-  
cluded,  
Man *did* live his life, *did* escape from the fray:



## A PROLOGUE

Not scratchless but unscathed, he somehow eluded  
Each blow fortune dealt him, and conquers to-  
day :

To-morrow—new chance and fresh strength,—  
might we say ?

220

Laud then Man's life—no defeat but a triumph !  
[*Explosion from the earth's centre.*

CLOTHO

Ha, loose hands !

LACHESIS

I reel in a swoond.

ATROPOS

Horror yawns under me, while from on high—  
humph !

Lightnings astound, thunders resound,  
Vault-roof reverberates, groans the ground !  
[*Silence.*

225

APOLLO

I acknowledge.

THE FATES

Hence, trickster ! Straight sobered  
are we !

The portent assures 't was our tongue spoke  
the truth,  
Not thine. While the vapour encompassed us  
three

We conceived and bore knowledge—a bantling  
uncouth,  
Old brains shudder back from : so—take it, rash  
youth !

230

Lick the lump into shape till a cry comes !

# APOLLO AND THE FATES

APOLLO

I hear.

THE FATES

Dumb music, dead eloquence ! Say it, or sing !  
What was quickened in us and thee also ?

APOLLO

I fear.

THE FATES

Half female, half male—go, ambiguous thing !  
While we speak—perchance sputter—pick up  
what we fling !

235

Known yet ignored, nor divined nor unguessed,  
Such is Man's law of life. Do we strive to  
declare  
What is ill, what is good in our spinning ?  
Worst, best,  
Change hues of a sudden : now here and now  
there  
Flits the sign which decides : all about yet no-  
where.

240

'T is willed so,—that Man's life be lived, first to  
last,  
Up and down, through and through,—not in  
portions, forsooth,  
To pick and to choose from. Our shuttles fly fast,  
Weave living, not life sole and whole : as age  
—youth,  
So death completes living, shows life in its truth.

245

Man learningly lives : till death helps him—no  
lore !

It is doom and must be. Dost submit ?

## A PROLOGUE

APOLLO

I assent—  
Concede but Admetus ! So much if no more  
Of my prayer grant as peace-pledge ! Be  
gracious though, blent,  
Good and ill, love and hate streak your life-gift !

THE FATES

Content ! 250

Such boon we accord in due measure. Life's term  
We lengthen should any be moved for love's sake  
To forego life's fulfilment, renounce in the germ  
Fruit mature—bliss or woe—either infinite.  
Take  
Or leave thy friend's lot : on his head be the stake ! 255

APOLLO

On mine, griesly gammers ! Admetus, I know  
thee !  
Thou prizest the right these unwittingly give  
Thy subjects to rush, pay obedience they owe thee !  
Importunate one with another they strive  
For the glory to die that their king may survive. 260  
Friends rush : and who first in all Pheræ appears  
But thy father to serve as thy substitute ?

CLOTHO

Bah !

APOLLO

Ye wince ? Then his mother, well-stricken in  
years,  
Advances her claim—or his wife—

# APOLLO AND THE FATES

LACHESIS

Tra-la-la !

APOLLO

But he spurns the exchange, rather dies !

ATROPOS

Ha, ha, ha ! 265  
[*Apollo ascends.*     *Darkness.*

## WITH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

### I

AY, this same midnight, by this chair of mine,  
Come and review thy counsels : art thou still  
Staunch to their teaching ?—not as fools opine  
Its purport might be, but as subtler skill  
Could, through turbidity, the loaded line 5  
Of logic casting, sound deep, deeper, till  
It touched a quietude and reached a shrine  
And recognized harmoniously combine  
Evil with good, and hailed truth's triumph—thine,  
Sage dead long since, Bernard de Mandeville ! 10

### II

Only, 't is no fresh knowledge that I crave,  
Fuller truth yet, new gainings from the grave ;  
Here we alive must needs deal fairly, turn  
To what account Man may Man's portion, learn  
Man's proper play with truth in part, before 15  
Entrusted with the whole. I ask no more  
Than smiling witness that I do my best  
With doubtful doctrine : afterward the rest !  
So, silent face me while I think and speak !  
A full disclosure ? Such would outrage law. 20  
Law deals the same with soul and body : seek  
Full truth my soul may, when some babe, I saw  
A new-born weakling, starts up strong—not  
weak—  
Man every whit, absolved from earning awe,  
Pride, rapture, if the soul attains to wreak 25

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Its will on flesh, at last can thrust, lift, draw,  
As mind bids muscle—mind which long has  
    striven,  
Painfully urging body's impotence  
To effort whereby—once law's barrier riven,  
Life's rule abolished—body might dispense 30  
With infancy's probation, straight be given  
—Not by foiled darings, fond attempts back-  
    driven,  
Fine faults of growth, brave sins which saint when  
    shriven—  
To stand full-statured in magnificence.

### III

No : as with body so deals law with soul 35  
That 's stung to strength through weakness,  
    strives for good  
Through evil,—earth its race-ground, heaven its  
    goal,  
Presumably : so far I understood  
Thy teaching long ago. But what means this  
—Objected by a mouth which yesterday 40  
Was magisterial in antithesis  
To half the truths we hold, or trust we may,  
Though tremblingly the while? “No sign”—  
    groaned he—  
“No stirring of God's finger to denote  
He wills that right should have supremacy 45  
On earth, not wrong! How helpful could we quote  
But one poor instance when he interposed  
Promptly and surely and beyond mistake  
Between oppression and its victim, closed  
Accounts with sin for once, and bade us wake 50  
From our long dream that justice bears no sword,  
Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves!  
So might we safely mock at what unnerves

## BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

Faith now, be spared the sapping fear's increase  
That haply evil's strife with good shall cease 55  
Never on earth. Nay, after earth, comes peace  
Born out of life-long battle? Man's lip curves  
With scorn: there, also, what if justice swerves  
From dealing doom, sets free by no swift stroke  
Right fettered here by wrong, but leaves life's  
yoke— 60  
Death should loose man from—fresh laid, past  
release?"

### IV

Bernard de Mandeville, confute for me  
This parlous friend who captured or set free  
Thunderbolts at his pleasure, yet would draw  
Back, panic-stricken by some puny straw 65  
Thy gold-rimmed amber-headed cane had whisked  
Out of his pathway if the object risked  
Encounter, 'scaped thy kick from buckled shoe!  
As when folk heard thee in old days pooh-pooh  
Addison's tye-wig preachment, grant this friend— 70  
(Whose groan I hear, with guffaw at the end  
Disposing of mock-melancholy)—grant  
His bilious mood one potion, ministrant  
Of homely wisdom, healthy wit! For, hear!  
"With power and will, let preference appear 75  
By intervention ever and aye, help good  
When evil's mastery is understood  
In some plain outrage, and triumphant wrong  
Tramples weak right to nothingness: nay, long  
Ere such sad consummation brings despair 80  
To right's adherents, ah, what help it were  
If wrong lay strangled in the birth—each head  
Of the hatched monster promptly crushed, instead  
Of spared to gather venom! We require  
No great experience that the inch-long worm, 85

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Free of our heel, would grow to vomit fire,  
And one day plague the world in dragon form.  
So should wrong merely peep abroad to meet  
Wrong's due quietus, leave our world's way safe  
For honest walking."

### v

Sage, once more repeat 90  
Instruction! 'T is a sore to soothe not chafe.  
Ah, Fabulist, what luck, could I contrive  
To coax from thee another "Grumbling Hive"!  
My friend himself wrote fables short and sweet:  
Ask him—"Suppose the Gardener of Man's  
ground 95  
Plants for a purpose, side by side with good,  
Evil—(and that he does so—look around!  
What does the field show?)—were it understood  
That purposely the noxious plant was found  
Vexing the virtuous, poison close to food, 100  
If, at first stealing-forth of life in stalk  
And leaflet-promise, quick his spud should baulk  
Evil from budding foliage, bearing fruit?  
Such timely treatment of the offending root  
Might strike the simple as wise husbandry, 105  
But swift sure extirpation scarce would suit  
Shrewder observers. Seed oncesown thrives: why  
Frustrate its product, miss the quality  
Which sower binds himself to count upon?  
Had seed fulfilled the destined purpose, gone 110  
Unhindered up to harvest—what know I  
But proof were gained that every growth of good  
Sprang consequent on evil's neighbourhood?"  
So said your shrewdness: true—so did not say  
That other sort of theorists who held 115  
Mere unintelligence prepared the way  
For either seed's upsprouting: you repelled



## BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

Their notion that both kinds could sow themselves.  
True ! but admit 't is understanding delves  
And drops each germ, what else but folly thwarts 120  
The doer's settled purpose ? Let the sage  
Concede a use to evil, though there starts  
Full many a burgeon thence, to disengage  
With thumb and finger lest it spoil the yield  
Too much of good's main tribute ! But our main 125  
Tough-tendoned mandrake-monster—purge the  
field  
Of him for once and all ? It follows plain  
Who set him there to grow beholds repealed  
His primal law : his ordinance proves vain :  
And what beseems a king who cannot reign, 130  
But to drop sceptre valid arm should wield ?

### VI

“Still there 's a parable”—retorts my friend—  
“Shows agriculture with a difference !  
What of the crop and weeds which solely blend  
Because, once planted, none may pluck them 135  
thence ?  
The Gardener contrived thus ? Vain pretence !  
An enemy it was who unawares  
Ruined the wheat by interspersing tares.  
Where 's our desiderated forethought ? Where 's  
Knowledge, where power and will in evidence ? 140  
'T is Man's-play merely ! Craft foils rectitude,  
Malignity defeats beneficence.  
And grant, at very last of all, the feud  
'Twixt good and evil ends, strange thoughts intrude  
Though good be garnered safely and good's foe 145  
Bundled for burning. Thoughts steal : 'even so—  
Why grant tares leave to thus o'ertop, o'ertower  
Their field-mate, boast the stalk and flaunt the  
flower,

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Triumph one sunny minute? Knowledge, power  
And will thus worked? Man's fancy makes the  
fault!

150

Man, with the narrow mind, must cram inside  
His finite God's infinitude,—earth's vault  
He bids comprise the heavenly far and wide,  
Since Man may claim a right to understand  
What passes understanding. So, succinct  
And trimly set in order, to be scanned  
And scrutinized, lo—the divine lies linked  
Fast to the human, free to move as moves  
Its proper match : awhile they keep the grooves,  
Discreetly side by side together pace,  
Till sudden comes a stumble incident  
Likely enough to Man's weak-footed race,  
And he discovers—wings in rudiment,  
Such as he boasts, which full-grown, free-distent  
Would lift him skyward, fail of flight while  
pent

155

160

165

Within humanity's restricted space.  
Abjure each fond attempt to represent  
The formless, the illimitable ! Trace  
No outline, try no hint of human face  
Or form or hand !”

## VII

Friend, here 's a tracing meant  
To help a guess at truth you never knew.  
Bend but those eyes now, using mind's eye too,  
And note—sufficient for all purposes—  
The ground-plan—map you long have yearned  
for—yes,  
Made out in markings—more what artist can ?—  
Goethe's Estate in Weimar,—just a plan !  
A. is the House, and B. the Garden-gate,  
And C. the Grass-plot—you 've the whole estate

170

175

## BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

Letter by letter, down to Y. the Pond,  
And Z. the Pig-stye. Do you look beyond 180  
The algebraic signs, and captious say  
“Is A. the House? But where 's the Roof to A.,  
Where 's Door, where 's Window? Needs must  
House have such!”

Ay, that were folly. Why so very much  
More foolish than our mortal purblind way 185  
Of seeking in the symbol no mere point  
To guide our gaze through what were else inane,  
But things—their solid selves? “Is, joint by  
joint,

Orion man-like,—as these dots explain  
His constellation? Flesh composed of suns— 190  
How can such be?” exclaim the simple ones.  
Look through the sign to the thing signified—  
Shown nowise, point by point at best descried,  
Each an orb's topmost sparkle : all beside  
Its shine is shadow : turn the orb one jot— 195  
Up flies the new flash to reveal 't was not  
The whole sphere late flamboyant in your ken !

### VIII

“What need of symbolizing? Fitlier men  
Would take on tongue mere facts—few, faint and  
far,  
Still facts not fancies : quite enough they are, 200  
That Power, that Knowledge, and that Will,—  
add then  
Immensity, Eternity : these jar  
Nowise with our permitted thought and speech.  
Why human attributes?”

A myth may teach :  
Only, who better would expound it thus 205  
Must be Euripides not Æschylus.

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

### IX

Boundingly up through Night's wall dense and  
dark,  
Embattled crags and clouds, outbroke the Sun  
Above the conscious earth, and one by one  
Her heights and depths absorbed to the last spark 210  
His fluid glory, from the far fine ridge  
Of mountain-granite which, transformed to gold,  
Laughed first the thanks back, to the vale's dusk  
fold  
On fold of vapour-swathing, like a bridge  
Shattered beneath some giant's stamp. Night  
wist 215  
Her work done and betook herself in mist  
To marsh and hollow there to bide her time  
Blindly in acquiescence. Everywhere  
Did earth acknowledge Sun's embrace sublime  
Thrilling her to the heart of things : since there 220  
No ore ran liquid, no spar branched anew,  
No arrowy crystal gleamed, but straightway grew  
Glad through the inrush—glad nor more nor less  
Than, 'neath his gaze, forest and wilderness,  
Hill, dale, land, sea, the whole vast stretch and  
spread, 225  
The universal world of creatures bred  
By Sun's munificence, alike gave praise—  
All creatures but one only : gaze for gaze,  
Joyless and thankless, who—all scowling can—  
Protests against the innumerable praises? Man, 230  
Sullen and silent.

Stand thou forth then, state  
Thy wrong, thou sole aggrieved—disconsolate—  
While every beast, bird, reptile, insect, gay  
And glad acknowledges the bounteous day!

## BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

### X

Man speaks now : " What avails Sun's earth-felt  
thrill 235  
To me? Sun penetrates the ore, the plant—  
They feel and grow : perchance with subtler skill  
He interfuses fly, worm, brute, until  
Each favoured object pays life's ministrant  
By pressing, in obedience to his will, 240  
Up to completion of the task prescribed,  
So stands and stays a type. Myself imbibed  
Such influence also, stood and stand complete—  
The perfect Man,—head, body, hands and feet,  
True to the pattern : but does that suffice? 245  
How of my superadded mind which needs  
—Not to be, simply, but to do, and pleads  
For—more than knowledge that by some device  
Sun quickens matter : mind is nobly fain  
To realize the marvel, make—for sense 250  
As mind—the unseen visible, condense  
—Myself—Sun's all-pervading influence  
So as to serve the needs of mind, explain  
What now perplexes. Let the oak increase  
His corrugated strength on strength, the palm 255  
Lift joint by joint her fan-fruit, ball and balm,—  
Let the coiled serpent bask in bloated peace,—  
The eagle, like some skyey derelict,  
Drift in the blue, suspended, glorying,—  
The lion lord it by the desert-spring,— 260  
What know or care they of the power which pricked  
Nothingness to perfection? I, instead,  
When all-developed still am found a thing  
All-incomplete : for what though flesh had force  
Transcending theirs—hands able to unring 265  
The tightened snake's coil, eyes that could out-  
course

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

The eagle's soaring, voice whereat the king  
Of carnage couched discrowned? Mind seeks to  
see,

Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,  
The outside mind—whose quickening I attain 270  
To recognize—I only. All in vain

Would mind address itself to render plain  
The nature of the essence. Drag what lurks  
Behind the operation—that which works  
Latently everywhere by outward proof— 275

Drag that mind forth to face mine? No! aloof  
I solely crave that one of all the beams  
Which do Sun's work in darkness, at my will  
Should operate—myself for once have skill  
To realize the energy which streams 280

Flooding the universe. Above, around,  
Beneath—why mocks that mind my own thus found  
Simply of service, when the world grows dark,  
To half-surmise—were Sun's use understood,  
I might demonstrate him supplying food, 285  
Warmth, life, no less the while? To grant one  
spark

Myself may deal with—make it thaw my blood  
And prompt my steps, were truer to the mark  
Of mind's requirement than a half-surmise  
That somehow secretly is operant 290

A power all matter feels, mind only tries  
To comprehend! Once more—no idle vaunt  
'Man comprehends the Sun's self!' Mysteries  
At source why probe into? Enough: display,  
Make demonstrable, how, by night as day, 295  
Earth's centre and sky's outspan, all 's informed  
Equally by Sun's efflux!—source from whence  
If just one spark I drew, full evidence  
Were mine of fire ineffably enthroned—  
Sun's self made palpable to Man!"

## BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

### XI

Thus moaned 300  
Man till Prometheus helped him,—as we learn,—  
Offered an artifice whereby he drew  
Sun's rays into a focus,—plain and true,  
The very Sun in little : made fire burn  
And henceforth do Man service—glass-conglobed 305  
Though to a pin-point circle—all the same  
Comprising the Sun's self, but Sun disrobed  
Of that else-unconceived essential flame  
Borne by no naked sight. Shall mind's eye strive  
Achingly to companion as it may 310  
The supersubtle effluence, and contrive  
To follow beam and beam upon their way  
Hand-breadth by hand-breadth, till sense faint—  
confessed  
Frustrate, eluded by unknown unguessed  
Infinitude of action? Idle quest! 315  
Rather ask aid from optics. Sense, descry  
The spectrum—mind, infer immensity!  
Little? In little, light, warmth, life are blessed—  
Which, in the large, who sees to bless? Not I  
More than yourself: so, good my friend, keep still 320  
Trustful with—me? with thee, sage Mandeville!

## WITH DANIEL BARTOLI <sup>1</sup>

### I

DON, the divinest women that have walked  
Our world were scarce those saints of whom we  
talked.

My saint, for instance—worship if you will !  
'T is pity poets need historians' skill :  
What legendary 's worth a chronicle ?

5

### II

Come, now ! A great lord once upon a time  
Visited—oh a king, of kings the prime,  
To sign a treaty such as never was :  
For the king's minister had brought to pass  
That this same duke—so style him—must engage 10  
Two of his dukedoms as an heritage  
After his death to this exorbitant  
Craver of kingship. “ Let who lacks go scant,  
Who owns much, give the more to ! ” Why rebuke ?  
So bids the devil, so obeys the duke.

15

### III

Now, as it happened, at his sister's house  
—Duchess herself—indeed the very spouse  
Of the king's uncle,—while the deed of gift

<sup>1</sup> A learned and ingenious writer. “ Fu Gesuita e Storico della Compagnia ; onde scrisse lunghissime storie, le quali sarebbero lette se non fossero ripiene traboccanti di tutte le superstizioni . . . Egli vi ha ficcati dentro tanti miracoloni, che diviene una noia insopportabile a chiunque voglia leggere quelle storie : e anche a me, non mi bastò l'animo di proseguire molto avanti.”  
—ANGELO CERUTTI.



## DANIEL BARTOLI

Whereby our duke should cut his rights adrift  
Was drawing, getting ripe to sign and seal— 20  
What does the frozen heart but uncongeal  
And, shaming his transcendent kin and kith,  
Whom do the duke's eyes make acquaintance with?  
A girl. "What, sister, may this wonder be?"  
"Nobody! Good as beautiful is she, 25  
With gifts that match her goodness, no faint flaw  
I' the white: she were the pearl you think you saw,  
But that she is—what corresponds to white?  
Some other stone, the true pearl's opposite,  
As cheap as pearls are costly. She's—now, guess 30  
Her parentage! Once—twice—thrice? Foiled,  
confess!  
Drugs, duke, her father deals in—faugh, the  
scents!—  
Manna and senna—such medicaments  
For payment he compounds you. Stay—stay—  
stay!  
I 'll have no rude speech wrong her! Whither 35  
away,  
The hot-head? Ah, the scapegrace! She deserves  
Respect—compassion, rather! Right it serves  
My folly, trusting secrets to a fool!  
Already at it, is he? She keeps cool—  
Helped by her fan's spread. Well, our state atones 40  
For thus much license, and words break no bones!"  
(Hearts, though, sometimes.)

### IV

Next morn 't was "Reason, rate,  
Rave, sister, on till doomsday! Sure as fate,  
I wed that woman—what a woman is  
Now that I know, who never knew till this!" 45  
So swore the duke. "I wed her: once again—  
Rave, rate, and reason—spend your breath in vain!"

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

### V

At once was made a contract firm and fast,  
Published the banns were, only marriage, last,  
Required completion when the Church's rite 50  
Should bless and bid depart, make happy quite  
The coupled man and wife for evermore :  
Which rite was soon to follow. Just before—  
All things at all but end—the folk o' the bride  
Flocked to a summons. Pomp the duke defied : 55  
“Of ceremony—so much as empowers,  
Nought that exceeds, suits best a tie like ours—”  
He smiled—“all else were mere futility.  
We vow, God hears us : God and you and I—  
Let the world keep at distance ! This is why 60  
We choose the simplest forms that serve to  
bind  
Lover and lover of the human kind,  
No care of what degree—of kings or clowns—  
Come blood and breeding. Courtly smiles and  
frowns  
Miss of their mark, would idly soothe or strike 65  
My style and yours—in one style merged alike—  
God's man and woman merely. Long ago  
'T was rounded in my ears ‘Duke, wherefore  
slow  
To use a privilege ? Needs must one who  
reigns  
Pay reigning's due : since statecraft so ordains— 70  
Wed for the commonweal's sake ! law prescribes  
One wife : but to submission license bribes  
Unruly nature : mistresses accept  
—Well, at discretion !’ Prove I so inept  
A scholar, thus instructed ? Dearest, be 75  
Wife and all mistresses in one to me,  
Now, henceforth, and forever !” So smiled he.

## DANIEL BARTOLI

### VI

Good : but the minister, the crafty one,  
Got ear of what was doing—all but done—  
Not sooner, though, than the king's very self, 80  
Warned by the sister on how sheer a shelf  
Royalty's ship was like to split. "I bar  
The abomination! Mix with muck my star?  
Shall earth behold prodigiously enorbed  
An upstart marsh-born meteor sun-absorbed? 85  
Nuptial me no such nuptials!" "Past dispute,  
Majesty speaks with wisdom absolute,"  
Admired the minister: "yet, all the same,  
I would we may not—while we play his game,  
The ducal meteor's—also lose our own, 90  
The solar monarch's: we relieve your throne  
Of an ungracious presence, like enough:  
Baulked of his project he departs in huff,  
And so cuts short—dare I remind the king?—  
Our not so unsuccessful bargaining. 95  
The contract for eventual heritage  
Happens to *pari passu* reach the stage  
Attained by just this other contract,—each  
Unfixed by signature though fast in speech.  
Off goes the duke in dudgeon—off withal 100  
Go with him his two dukedoms past recall.  
You save a fool from tasting folly's fruit,  
Obtain small thanks thereby, and lose to boot  
Sagacity's reward. The jest is grim:  
The man will mulct you—for americing him? 105  
Nay, for . . . permit a poor similitude!  
A witless wight in some fantastic mood  
Would drown himself: you plunge into the wave,  
Pluck forth the undeserving: he, you save,  
Pulls you clean under also for your pains. 110  
Sire, little need that I should tax my brains

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

To help your inspiration ! ” “ Let him sink !  
Always contriving ”—hints the royal wink—  
“ To keep ourselves dry while we claim his clothes. ”

### VII

Next day, the appointed day for plighting troths 115  
At eve,—so little time to lose, you see,  
Before the Church should weld indissolubly  
Bond into bond, wed these who, side by side,  
Sit each by other, bold groom, blushing bride,—  
At the preliminary banquet, graced 120  
By all the lady’s kinsfolk come in haste  
To share her triumph,—lo, a thunderclap !  
“ Who importunes now ? ” “ Such is my mishap—  
In the king’s name ! No need that any stir  
Except this lady ! ” bids the minister : 125  
“ With her I claim a word apart, no more :  
For who gainsays—a guard is at the door.  
Hold, duke ! Submit you, lady, as I bow  
To him whose mouthpiece speaks his pleasure now !  
It well may happen I no whit arrest 130  
Your marriage : be it so,—we hope the best !  
By your leave, gentles ! Lady, pray you, hence !  
Duke, with my soul and body’s deference ! ”

### VIII

Doors shut, mouth opens and persuasion flows  
Copiously forth. “ What flesh shall dare oppose 135  
The king’s command ? The matter in debate  
—How plain it is ! Yourself shall arbitrate,  
Determine. Since the duke affects to rate  
His prize in you beyond all goods of earth,  
Accounts as nought old gains of rank and birth, 140  
Ancestral obligation, recent fame,  
(We know his feats)—nay, ventures to disclaim  
Our will and pleasure almost—by report—

## DANIEL BARTOLI

Waives in your favour dukeliness, in short,—  
We—('t is the king speaks)—who might forthwith  
stay 145  
Such suicidal purpose, brush away  
A bad example shame would else record,—  
Lean to indulgence rather. At his word  
We take the duke : allow him to complete  
The cession of his dukedoms, leave our feet 150  
Their footstool when his own head, safe in vault,  
Sleeps sound. Nay, would the duke repair his  
fault  
Handsomely, and our forfeited esteem  
Recover,—what if wisely he redeem  
The past,—in earnest of good faith, at once 155  
Give us such jurisdiction for the nonce  
As may suffice—prevent occasion slip—  
And constitute our actual ownership?  
Concede this—straightway be the marriage blessed  
By warrant of this paper ! Things at rest, 160  
This paper duly signed, down drops the bar,  
To-morrow you become—from what you are,  
The druggist's daughter—not the duke's mere  
spouse,  
But the king's own adopted : heart and house  
Open to you—the idol of a court 165  
'Which heaven might copy'—sing our poet-sort.  
In this emergency, on you depends  
The issue : plead what bliss the king intends !  
Should the duke frown, should arguments and  
prayers,  
Nay, tears if need be, prove in vain,—who cares ? 170  
We leave the duke to his obduracy,  
Companionless,—you, madam, follow me  
Without, where divers of the body-guard  
Wait signal to enforce the king's award  
Of strict seclusion : over you at least 175

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Vibratingly the sceptre threats increased  
Precipitation ! How avert its crash ? ”

### IX

“ Re-enter, sir ! A hand that ’s calm, not rash,  
Averts it ! ” quietly the lady said.  
“ Yourself shall witness.”

At the table’s head 180  
Where, mid the hushed guests, still the duke sat  
glued  
In blank bewilderment, his spouse pursued  
Her speech to end—syllabled quietude.

### X

“ Duke, I, your duchess of a day, could take  
The hand you proffered me for love’s sole sake, 185  
Conscious my love matched yours ; as you, my-  
self

Would waive, when need were, all but love—from  
pelf

To potency. What fortune brings about  
Haply in some far future, finds me out,  
Faces me on a sudden here and now. 190

The better ! Read—if beating heart allow—  
Read this, and bid me rend to rags the shame !  
I and your conscience—hear and grant our claim !  
Never dare alienate God’s gift you hold  
Simply in trust for him ! Choose muck for gold ? 195  
Could you so stumble in your choice, cajoled  
By what I count my least of worthiness  
—The youth, the beauty,—you renounce them  
—yes,

With all that ’s most too : love as well you lose,  
Slain by what slays in you the honour ! Choose ! 200  
Dear—yet my husband—dare I love you yet ? ”

## DANIEL BARTOLI

### XI

How the duke's wrath o'erboiled,—words, words  
and yet  
More words,—I spare you such fool's fever-fret.  
They were not of one sort at all, one size,  
As souls go—he and she. 'T is said, the eyes 205  
Of all the lookers-on let tears fall fast.  
The minister was mollified at last :  
“Take a day,—two days even, ere through pride  
You perish,—two days' counsel—then decide!”

### XII

—“If I shall save his honour and my soul? 210  
Husband,—this one last time,—you tear the  
scroll?  
Farewell, duke! Sir, I follow in your train!”

### XIII

So she went forth : they never met again  
The duke and she. The world paid compliment  
(Is it worth noting?) when, next day, she sent 215  
Certain gifts back—“jewelry fit to deck  
Whom you call wife.” I know not round what neck  
They took to sparkling, in good time—weeks  
thence.

### XIV

Of all which was the pleasant consequence,  
So much and no more—that a fervid youth, 220  
Big-hearted boy,—but ten years old, in truth,—  
Laid this to heart and loved, as boyhood can,  
The unduchessed lady : boy and lad grew man :  
He loved as man perchance may : did meanwhile  
Good soldier-service, managed to beguile 225  
The years, no few, until he found a chance :

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Then, as at trumpet-summons to advance,  
Outbroke the love that stood at arms so long,  
Brooked no withstanding longer. They were wed.  
Whereon from camp and court alike he fled, 230  
Renounced the sun-king, dropped off into night,  
Evermore lost, a ruined satellite :  
And, oh, the exquisite deliciousness  
That lapped him in obscurity ! You guess  
Such joy is fugitive : she died full soon. 235  
He did his best to die—as sun, so moon  
Left him, turned dusk to darkness absolute.  
Failing of death—why, saintship seemed to suit :  
Yes, your sort, Don ! He trembled on the verge  
Of monkhood : trick of cowl and taste of scourge 240  
He tried : then, kicked not at the pricks perverse,  
But took again, for better or for worse,  
The old way in the world, and, much the same  
Man o' the outside, fairly played life's game.

### XV

“ Now, Saint Scholastica, what time she fared 245  
In Paynimrie, behold, a lion glared  
Right in her path ! Her waist she promptly strips  
Of girdle, binds his teeth within his lips,  
And, leashed all lamblike, to the Soldan's court  
Leads him.” Ay, many a legend of the sort 250  
Do you praiseworthily authenticate :  
Spare me the rest. This much of no debate  
Admits : my lady flourished in grand days  
When to be duchess was to dance the hays  
Up, down, across the heaven amid its host : 255  
While to be hailed the sun's own self almost—  
So close the kinship—was—was—

Saint, for this,  
Be yours the feet I stoop to—kneel and kiss !



## DANIEL BARTOLI

So human? Then the mouth too, if you will!  
Thanks to no legend but a chronicle.

260

### XVI

One leans to like the duke, too: up we 'll patch  
Some sort of saintship for him—not to match  
Hers—but man's best and woman's worst amount  
So nearly to the same thing, that we count  
In man a miracle of faithfulness  
If, while unfaithful somewhat, he lay stress  
On the main fact that love, when love indeed,  
Is wholly solely love from first to last—  
Truth—all the rest a lie. Too likely, fast  
Enough that necklace went to grace the throat  
—Let's say, of such a dancer as makes doat  
The senses when the soul is satisfied—  
*Trogalia*, say the Greeks—a sweetmeat tried  
Approvingly by sated tongue and teeth,  
Once body's proper meal consigned beneath  
Such unconsidered munching.

265

270

275

### XVII

Fancy's flight  
Makes me a listener when, some sleepless night,  
The duke reviewed his memories, and aghast  
Found that the Present intercepts the Past  
With such effect as when a cloud enwraps  
The moon and, moon-suffused, plays moon per-  
haps  
To who walks under, till comes, late or soon,  
A stumble: up he looks, and lo, the moon  
Calm, clear, convincingly herself once more!  
How could he 'scape the cloud that thrust be-  
tween  
Him and effulgence? Speak, fool—duke, I  
mean!

280

285

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

### XVIII

“ Who bade you come, brisk-marching bold she-  
shape,

A terror with those black-balled worlds of eyes,  
That black hair bristling solid-built from nape

To crown it coils about? O dread surmise! 290

Take, tread on, trample under past escape

Your capture, spoil and trophy! Do—devise  
Insults for one who, fallen once, ne’er shall rise!

“ Mock on, triumphant o’er the prostrate shame!

Laugh ‘Here lies he among the false to Love— 295

Love’s loyal liegeman once: the very same

Who, scorning his weak fellows, towered above  
Inconstancy: yet why his faith defame?

Our eagle’s victor was at least no dove,  
No dwarfish knight picked up our giant’s glove— 300

“ ‘When, putting prowess to the proof, faith urged

Her champion to the challenge: had it chanced  
That merely virtue, wisdom, beauty—merged

All in one woman—merely these advanced  
Their claim to conquest,—hardly had he purged 305

His mind of memories, dearnesses enhanced  
Rather than harmed by death, nor, disenfranced,

“ ‘Promptly had he abjured the old pretence

To prove his kind’s superior—first to last

Display erect on his heart’s eminence 310

An altar to the never-dying Past.

For such feat faith might boast fit play of fence

And easily disarm the iconoclast  
Called virtue, wisdom, beauty: impudence

“ ‘Fought in their stead, and how could faith but  
fall?

315

## DANIEL BARTOLI

There came a bold she-shape brisk-marching,  
bent  
No inch of her imperious stature, tall  
As some war-engine from whose top was sent  
One shattering volley out of eye's black ball,  
And prone lay faith's defender !' Mockery  
spent ?  
Malice discharged in full ? In that event,

320

"My queenly impudence, I cover close,  
I wrap me round with love of your black hair,  
Black eyes, black every wicked inch of those  
Limbs' war-tower tallness : so much truth lives  
there

325

'Neath the dead heap of lies. And yet—whoknows?  
What if such things are ? No less, such things  
were.

Then was the man your match whom now you dare

"Treat as existent still. A second truth !

They held—this heap of lies you rightly scorn—  
A man who had approved himself in youth

330

More than a match for—you ? for sea-foam-born  
Venus herself : you conquer him forsooth ?

'T is me his ghost : he died since left and lorn,  
As needs must Samson when his hair is shorn.

335

"Some day, and soon, be sure himself will rise,

Called into life by her who long ago  
Left his soul whiling time in flesh-disguise.

Ghoststired of waiting can play tricks, you know !

Tread, trample me—such sport we ghosts devise,

340

Waiting the morn-star's re-appearance—though  
You think we vanish scared by the cock's crow."

## WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART

### I

It seems as if . . . or did the actual chance  
Startle me and perplex? Let truth be said!  
How might this happen? Dreaming, blindfold led  
By visionary hand, did soul's advance  
Precede my body's, gain inheritance 5  
Of fact by fancy—so that when I read  
At length with waking eyes your Song, instead  
Of mere bewilderment, with me first glance  
Was but full recognition that in trance  
Or merely thought's adventure some old day 10  
Of dim and done-with boyishness, or—well,  
Why might it not have been, the miracle  
Broke on me as I took my sober way  
Through veritable regions of our earth  
And made discovery, many a wondrous one? 15

### II

Anyhow, fact or fancy, such its birth:  
I was exploring some huge house, had gone  
Through room and room complacently, no dearth  
Anywhere of the signs of decent taste,  
Adequate culture: wealth had run to waste 20  
Nowise, nor penury was proved by stint:  
All showed the Golden Mean without a hint  
Of brave extravagance that breaks the rule.  
The master of the mansion was no fool  
Assuredly, no genius just as sure! 25  
Safe mediocrity had scorned the lure

## CHRISTOPHER SMART

Of now too much and now too little cost,  
And satisfied me sight was never lost  
Of moderate design's accomplishment  
In calm completeness. On and on I went, 30  
With no more hope than fear of what came next,  
Till lo, I push a door, sudden uplift  
A hanging, enter, chance upon a shift  
Indeed of scene! So—thus it is thou deck'st,  
High heaven, our low earth's brick-and-mortar  
work? 35

### III

It was the Chapel. That a star, from murk  
Which hid, should flashingly emerge at last,  
Were small surprise: but from broad day I passed  
Into a presence that turned shine to shade.  
There fronted me the Rafael Mother-Maid, 40  
Never to whom knelt votarist in shrine  
By Nature's bounty helped, by Art's divine  
More varied—beauty with magnificence—  
Than this: from floor to roof one evidence  
Of how far earth may rival heaven. No niche 45  
Where glory was not prisoned to enrich  
Man's gaze with gold and gems, no space but  
glowed  
With colour, gleamed with carving—hues which  
owed  
Their outburst to a brush the painter fed  
With rainbow-substance—rare shapes never wed 50  
To actual flesh and blood, which, brain-born once,  
Became the sculptor's dowry, Art's response  
To earth's despair. And all seemed old yet new:  
Youth,—in the marble's curve, the canvas' hue,  
Apparent,—wanted not the crowning thrill 55  
Of age the consecrator. Hands long still  
Had worked here—could it be, what lent them skill

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Retained a power to supervise, protect,  
Enforce new lessons with the old, connect  
Our life with theirs? No merely modern touch 60  
Told me that here the artist, doing much,  
Elsewhere did more, perchance does better, lives—  
So needs must learn.

### IV

Well, these provocatives  
Having fulfilled their office, forth I went  
Big with anticipation—well-nigh fear— 65  
Of what next room and next for startled eyes  
Might have in store, surprise beyond surprise.  
Next room and next and next—what followed  
here?  
Why, nothing! not one object to arrest  
My passage—everywhere too manifest 70  
The previous decent null and void of best  
And worst, mere ordinary right and fit,  
Calm commonplace which neither missed, nor hit  
Inch-high, inch-low, the placid mark proposed.

### V

Armed with this instance, have I diagnosed 75  
Your case, my Christopher? The man was sound  
And sane at starting: all at once the ground  
Gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke  
Curled up and caught him, or perhaps down broke  
A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both 80  
In conflagration. Then—as heaven were loth  
To linger—let earth understand too well  
How heaven at need can operate—off fell  
The flame-robe, and the untransfigured man  
Resumed sobriety,—as he began, 85  
So did he end nor alter pace, not he!

## CHRISTOPHER SMART

### VI

Now, what I fain would know is—could it be  
That he—whoe'er he was that furnished forth  
The Chapel, making thus, from South to North,  
Rafael touch Leighton, Michelagnolo 90  
Join Watts, was found but once combining so  
The elder and the younger, taking stand  
On Art's supreme,—or that yourself who sang  
A Song where flute-breath silvers trumpet-clang,  
And stations you for once on either hand 95  
With Milton and with Keats, empowered to claim  
Affinity on just one point—(or blame  
Or praise my judgment, thus it fronts you full)—  
How came it you resume the void and null,  
Subside to insignificance,—live, die 100  
—Proved plainly two mere mortals who drew nigh  
One moment—that, to Art's best hierarchy,  
This, to the superhuman poet-pair?  
What if, in one point only, then and there  
The otherwise all-unapproachable 105  
Allowed impingement? Does the sphere pretend  
To span the cube's breadth, cover end to end  
The plane with its embrace? No, surely! Still,  
Contact is contact, sphere's touch no whit less  
Than cube's superimposure. Such success 110  
Befell Smart only out of throngs between  
Milton and Keats that donned the singing-dress—  
Smart, solely of such songmen, pierced the screen  
'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from  
soul,—  
Left no fine film-flake on the naked coal 115  
Live from the censer—shapely or uncouth,  
Fire-suffused through and through, one blaze of  
truth  
Undeaded by a lie,—(you have my mind)—

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

For, think ! this blaze outleapt with black behind  
And blank before, when Hayley and the rest . . . 120  
But let the dead successors worst and best  
Bury their dead : with life be my concern—  
Yours with the fire-flame : what I fain would learn  
Is just—(suppose me haply ignorant  
Down to the common knowledge, doctors vaunt) 125  
Just this—why only once the fire-flame was :  
No matter if the marvel came to pass  
The wayfolk judged—if power too long suppressed  
Broke loose and maddened, as the vulgar guessed,  
Or simply brain-disorder (doctors said) 130  
A turmoil of the particles disturbed  
Brain's workaday performance in your head,  
Spurred spirit to wild action health had curbed :  
And so verse issued in a cataract  
Whence prose, before and after, unperturbed 135  
Was wont to wend its way. Concede the fact  
That here a poet was who always could—  
Never before did—never after would—  
Achieve the feat : how were such fact explained ?

### VII

Was it that when, by rarest chance, there fell 140  
Disguise from Nature, so that Truth remained  
Naked, and whoso saw for once could tell  
Us others of her majesty and might  
In large, her lovelinesses infinite  
In little,—straight you used the power wherewith 145  
Sense, penetrating as through rind to pith  
Each object, thoroughly revealed might view  
And comprehend the old things thus made new,  
So that while eye saw, soul to tongue could trust  
Thing which struck word out, and once more  
adjust 150  
Real vision to right language, till heaven's vault



## CHRISTOPHER SMART

Pompous with sunset, storm-stirred sea's assault  
On the swilled rock-ridge, earth's embosomed  
brood

Of tree and flower and weed, with all the life  
That flies or swims or crawls, in peace or strife, 155  
Above, below,—each had its note and name  
For Man to know by,—Man who, now—the same  
As erst in Eden, needs that all he sees  
Be named him ere he note by what degrees  
Of strength and beauty to its end Design 160  
Ever thus operates—(your thought and mine,  
No matter for the many dissident)—  
So did you sing your Song, so truth found vent  
In words for once with you?

### VIII

Then—back was furled  
The robe thus thrown aside, and straight the world 165  
Darkened into the old oft-catalogued  
Repository of things that sky, wave, land,  
Or show or hide, clear late, accretion-clogged  
Now, just as long ago, by tellings and  
Re-tellings to satiety, which strike 170  
Muffled upon the ear's drum. Very like  
None was so startled as yourself when friends  
Came, hailed your fast-returning wits: "Health  
mends  
Importantly, for—to be plain with you—  
This scribble on the wall was done—in lieu 175  
Of pen and paper—with—ha, ha!—your key  
Denting it on the wainscot! Do you see  
How wise our caution was? Thus much we stopped  
Of babble that had else grown print: and lopped  
From your trim bay-tree this unsightly bough— 180  
Smart's who translated Horace! Write us  
now" . . .

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Why, what Smart did write—never afterward  
One line to show that he, who paced the sward,  
Had reached the zenith from his madhouse cell.

### IX

Was it because you judged (I know full well 185  
You never had the fancy)—judged—as some—  
That who makes poetry must reproduce  
Thus ever and thus only, as they come,  
Each strength, each beauty, everywhere diffuse  
Throughout creation, so that eye and ear, 190  
Seeing and hearing, straight shall recognise,  
At touch of just a trait, the strength appear,—  
Suggested by a line's lapse see arise  
All evident the beauty,—fresh surprise  
Startling at fresh achievement? “So, indeed, 195  
Wallows the whale's bulk in the waste of brine,  
Nor otherwise its feather-tufts make fine  
Wild Virgin's Bower when stars faint off to seed!”  
(My prose—your poetry I dare not give,  
Purpling too much my mere grey argument.) 200  
—Was it because you judged—when fugitive  
Was glory found, and wholly gone and spent  
Such power of startling up deaf ear, blind eye,  
At truth's appearance,—that you humbly bent  
The head and, bidding vivid work good-bye, 205  
Doffed lyric dress and trod the world once more  
A drab-clothed decent proseman as before?  
Strengths, beauties, by one word's flash thus laid  
bare  
—That was effectual service: made aware  
Of strengths and beauties, Man but hears the  
text, 210  
Awaits your teaching. Nature? What comes  
next?  
Why all the strength and beauty?—to be shown  
186

## CHRISTOPHER SMART

Thus in one word's flash, thenceforth let alone  
By Man who needs must deal with aught that 's  
known

Never so lately and so little? Friend, 215

First give us knowledge, then appoint its use!

Strength, beauty are the means : ignore their end?

As well you stopped at proving how profuse

Stones, sticks, nay stubble lie to left and right

Ready to help the builder,—careless quite 220

If he should take, or leave the same to strew

Earth idly,—as by word's flash bring in view

Strength, beauty, then bid who beholds the same

Go on beholding. Why gains unemployed?

Nature was made to be by Man enjoyed 225

First; followed duly by enjoyment's fruit,

Instruction—haply leaving joy behind :

And you, the instructor, would you slack pursuit

Of the main prize, as poet help mankind

Just to enjoy, there leave them? Play the fool, 230

Abjuring a superior privilege?

Please simply when your function is to rule—

By thought incite to deed? From edge to edge

Of earth's round, strength and beauty everywhere

Pullulate—and must you particularize 235

All, each and every apparition? Spare

Yourself and us the trouble! Ears and eyes

Want so much strength and beauty, and no less

Nor more, to learn life's lesson by. Oh, yes—

The other method 's favoured in our day! 240

The end ere the beginning : as you may,

Master the heavens before you study earth,

Make you familiar with the meteor's birth

Ere you descend to scrutinize the rose!

I say, o'erstep no least one of the rows 245

That lead man from the bottom where he plants

Foot first of all, to life's last ladder-top :

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Arrived there, vain enough will seem the vaunts  
Of those who say—"We scale the skies, then drop  
To earth—to find, how all things there are loth 250  
To answer heavenly law : we understand  
The meteor's course, and lo, the rose's growth—  
How other than should be by law's command !"  
Would not you tell such—"Friends, beware lest  
fume

Offuscate sense : learn earth first ere presume 255  
To teach heaven legislation. Law must be  
Active in earth or nowhere : earth you see,—  
Or there or not at all, Will, Power, and Love  
Admit discovery,—as below, above  
See next law's confirmation ! But reverse 260  
The order, where's the wonder things grow worse  
Than, by the law your fancy formulates,  
They should be ? Cease from anger at the fates  
Which thwart themselves so madly. Live and  
learn,  
Not first learn and then live, is our concern." 265

# WITH GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

## I

AH, George Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe,—  
no,

Yours was the wrong way!—always understand,  
Supposing that permissibly you planned  
How statesmanship—your trade—in outward show  
Might figure as inspired by simple zeal 5  
For serving country, king, and commonweal,  
(Though service tire to death the body, tease  
The soul from out an o'ertasked patriot-drudge)  
And yet should prove zeal's outward show agrees  
In all respects—right reason being judge— 10  
With inward care that, while the statesman spends  
Body and soul thus freely for the sake  
Of public good, his private welfare take  
No harm by such devotedness. Intends  
Scripture aught else—let captious folk inquire— 15  
Which teaches “Labourers deserve their hire,  
And who neglects his household bears the bell  
Away of sinning from an infidel”?  
Wiselier would fools that carp bestow a thought  
How birds build nests; at outside, roughly wrought, 20  
Twig knots with twig, loam plasters up each chink,  
Leaving the inmate rudely lodged—you think?  
Peep but inside! That specious rude-and-rough  
Covers a domicile where downy fluff  
Embeds the ease-deserving architect, 25  
Who toiled and moiled not merely to effect  
'Twixt sprig and spray a stop-gap in the teeth

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Of wind and weather, guard what swung beneath  
From upset only, but contrived himself  
A snug interior, warm and soft and sleek. 30  
Of what material? Oh, for that, you seek  
How nature prompts each volatile! Thus—pelf  
Smoothens the human mudlark's lodging, power  
Demands some hardier wrappage to embrace  
Robuster heart-beats: rock, not tree nor tower, 35  
Contents the building eagle: rook shoves close  
To brother rook on branch, while crow morose  
Apart keeps balance perched on topmost bough.  
No sort of bird but suits his taste somehow:  
Nay, Darwin tells of such as love the bower— 40  
His bower-birds opportunely yield us yet  
The lacking instance when at loss to get  
A feathered parallel to what we find  
The secret motor of some mighty mind  
That worked such wonders—all for vanity! 45  
Worked them to haply figure in the eye  
Of intimates as first of—doers' kind?  
Actors', that work in earnest sportively,  
Paid by a sourish smile. How says the Sage?  
Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage 50  
With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts  
Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,  
Whereon to pose and posture and engage  
The priceless female simper.

### II

I have gone  
Thus into detail, George Bubb Dodington, 55  
Lest, when I take you presently to task  
For the wrong way of working, you should ask  
“What fool conjectures that profession means  
Performance? that who goes behind the scenes  
Finds,—acting over,—still the soot-stuff screens 60

## GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

Othello's visage, still the self-same cloak's  
Bugle-bright-blackness half reveals half chokes  
Hamlet's emotion, as ten minutes since?"

No, each resumes his garb, stands—Moor or  
prince—

Decently draped : just so with statesmanship ! 65

All outside show, in short, is sham—why wince ?

Concede me—while our parley lasts ! You trip

Afterwards—lay but this to heart ! (there lurks

Somewhere in all of us a lump which irks

Somewhat the sprightliest-scheming brain that 's  
bent 70

On brave adventure, would but heart consent !)

—Here trip you, that—your aim allowed as right—

Your means thereto were wrong. Come, we, this  
night,

Profess one purpose, hold one principle,

Are at odds only as to—not the will 75

But way of winning solace for ourselves

—No matter if the ore for which zeal delves

Be gold or coprolite, while zeal's pretence

Is—we do good to men at—whose expense

But ours ? who tire the body, tease the soul, 80

Simply that, running, we may reach fame's goal

And wreathe at last our brows with bay—the  
State's

Disinterested slaves, nay—please the Fates—

Saviours and nothing less : such lot has been !

Statesmanship triumphs pedestalled, serene,— 85

O happy consummation !—brought about

By managing with skill the rabble-rout

For which we labour (never mind the name—

People or populace, for praise or blame)

Making them understand—their heaven, their hell, 90

Their every hope and fear is ours as well.

Man's cause—what other can we have at heart ?

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Whence follows that the necessary part  
High o'er Man's head we play,—and freelier  
breathe

Just that the multitude which gasps beneath 95  
May reach the level where unstified stand  
Ourselves at vantage to put forth a hand,  
Assist the prostrate public. 'T is by right  
Merely of such pretence, we reach the height.  
Where storms abound, to brave—nay, court their  
stress, 100

Though all too well aware—of pomp the less,  
Of peace the more! But who are we, to spurn  
For peace' sake, duty's pointing? Up, then—  
earn

Albeit no prize we may but martyrdom!  
Now, such fit height to launch salvation from, 105  
How get and gain? Since help must needs be  
craved

By would-be saviours of the else-unsaved,  
How coax them to co-operate, lend a lift,  
Kneel down and let us mount?

### III

You say "Make shift  
By sham—the harsh word : preach and teach, per-  
suade 110

Somehow the Public—not despising aid  
Of salutary artifice—we seek  
Solely their good : our strength would raise the  
weak,

Our cultivated knowledge supplement  
Their rudeness, rawness : why to us were lent 115  
Ability except to come in use?

Who loves his kind must by all means induce  
That kind to let his love play freely, press  
In Man's behalf to full performance!"



# GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

## IV

Yes—

Yes, George, we know!—whereat they hear, believe, 120  
And bend the knee, and on the neck receive  
Who fawned and cringed to purpose? Not so,  
George!

Try simple falsehood on shrewd folk who forge  
Lies of superior fashion day by day  
And hour by hour? With craftsmen versed as they 125  
What chance of competition when the tools  
Only a novice wields? Are knaves such fools?  
Disinterested patriots, spare your tongue  
The tones thrice-silvery, cheek save smiles it flung  
Pearl-like profuse to swine—a herd, whereof 130  
No unit needs be taught, his neighbour's trough  
Scarce holds for who but grunts and whines the  
husks

Due to a wrinkled snout that shows sharp tusks.  
No animal—much less our lordly Man—  
Obeys its like : with strength all rule began, 135  
The stoutest awes the pasture. Soon succeeds  
Discrimination,—nicer power Man needs  
To rule him than is bred of bone and thew :  
Intelligence must move strength's self. This too  
Lasts but its time : the multitude at length 140  
Looks inside for intelligence and strength  
And finds them here and there to pick and choose :  
“All at your service, mine, see!” Ay, but who's  
My George, at this late day, to make his boast  
“In strength, intelligence, I rule the roast, 145  
Beat, all and some, the ungraced who crowd your  
ranks?”

“Oh, but I love, would lead you, gain your thanks  
By unexampled yearning for Man's sake—  
Passion that solely waits your help to take

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Effect in action !” George, which one of us 150  
But holds with his own heart communion thus :  
“ I am, if not of men the first and best,  
Still—to receive enjoyment—properest :  
Which since by force I cannot, nor by wit  
Most likely—craft must serve in place of it. 155  
Flatter, cajole ! If so I bring within  
My net the gains which wit and force should win,  
What hinders ?” ’T is a trick we know of old :  
Try, George, some other of tricks manifold !  
The multitude means mass and mixture—right ! 160  
Are mixtures simple, pray, or composite ?  
Dive into Man, your medley : see the waste !  
Sloth-stifled genius, energy disgraced  
By ignorance, high aims with sorry skill,  
Will without means and means in want of will 165  
—Sure we might fish, from out the mothers’ sons  
That welter thus, a dozen Dodingtons !  
Why call up Dodington, and none beside,  
To take his seat upon our backs and ride  
As statesman conquering and to conquer ? Well, 170  
The last expedient, which must needs excel  
Those old ones—this it is,—at any rate  
To-day’s conception thus I formulate :  
As simple force has been replaced, just so  
Must simple wit be : men have got to know 175  
Such wit as what you boast is nowise held  
The wonder once it was, but, paralleled  
Too plentifully, counts not,—puts to shame  
Modest possessors like yourself who claim,  
By virtue of it merely, power and place 180  
—Which means the sweets of office. Since our race  
Teems with the like of you, some special gift,  
Your very own, must coax our hands to lift,  
And backs to bear you : is it just and right  
To privilege your nature ?

# GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

## V

“State things quite 185  
Other than so”—make answer! “I pretend  
No such community with men. Perpend  
My key to domination! Who would use  
Man for his pleasure needs must introduce  
The element that awes Man. Once for all, 190  
His nature owns a Supernatural  
In fact as well as phrase—which found must be  
—Where, in this doubting age? Old mystery  
Has served its turn—seen through and sent adrift  
To nothingness: new wizard-craft makes shift 195  
Nowadays shorn of help by robe and book,—  
Otherwise, elsewhere, for success must look  
Than chalked-ring, incantation-gibberish.  
Somebody comes to conjure: that’s he? Pish!  
He’s like the roomful of rapt gazers,—there’s 200  
No sort of difference in the garb he wears  
From ordinary dressing,—gesture, speech,  
Deportment, just like those of all and each  
That eye their master of the minute. Stay!  
What of the something—call it how you may— 205  
Uncanny in the—quack? That’s easy said!  
Notice how the Professor turns no head  
And yet takes cognizance of who accepts,  
Denies, is puzzled as to the adept’s  
Supremacy, yields up or lies in wait 210  
To trap the trickster! Doubtless, out of date  
Are dealings with the devil: yet, the stir  
Of mouth, its smile half smug half sinister,  
Mock-modest boldness masked in diffidence ,  
What if the man have—who knows how or  
whence?— 215  
Confederate potency unguessed by us—  
Prove no such cheat as he pretends?”

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

### VI

Ay, thus  
Had but my George played statesmanship's new  
card  
That carries all ! " Since we "—avers the Bard—  
" All of us have one human heart "—as good 220  
As say—by all of us is understood  
Right and wrong, true and false—in rough, at least,  
We own a common conscience. God, man,  
beast—  
How should we qualify the statesman-shape  
I fancy standing with our world agape ? 225  
Disguise, flee, fight against with tooth and nail  
The outrageous designation ! " Quack " men quail  
Before ? You see, a little year ago  
They heard him thunder at the thing which, lo,  
To-day he vaunts for unscathed, while what erst 230  
Heaven-high he lauded, lies hell-low, accursed !  
And yet where 's change ? Who, awe-struck, cares  
to point  
Critical finger at a dubious joint  
In armour, true *as triplex*, breast and back  
Binding about, defiant of attack, 235  
An imperturbability that 's—well,  
Or innocence or impudence—how tell  
One from the other ? Could ourselves broach lies,  
Yet brave mankind with those unaltered eyes,  
Those lips that keep the quietude of truth ? 240  
Dare we attempt the like ? What quick uncouth  
Disturbance of thy smug economy,  
O coward visage ! Straight would all descry  
Back on the man's brow the boy's blush once more !  
No : he goes deeper—could our sense explore— 245  
Finds conscience beneath conscience such as ours.  
Genius is not so rare,—prodigious powers—

## GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

Well, others boast such,—but a power like this  
Mendacious intrepidity—*quid vis?*

Besides, imposture plays another game, 250  
Admits of no diversion from its aim  
Of captivating hearts, sets zeal a-flare  
In every shape at every turn,—nowhere  
Allows subsidence into ash. By stress  
Of what does guile succeed but earnestness, 255  
Earnest word, look and gesture? Touched with  
aught

But earnestness, the levity were fraught  
With ruin to guile's film-work. Grave is guile;  
Here no act wants its qualifying smile,  
Its covert pleasantry to neutralize 260

The outward ardour. Can our chief despise  
Even while most he seems to adulate?  
As who should say "What though it be my fate  
To deal with fools? Among the crowd must lurk  
Some few with faculty to judge my work 265

Spite of its way which suits, they understand,  
The crass majority :—the Sacred Band,  
No duping them forsooth!" So tells a touch  
Of subintelligential nod and wink—  
Turning foes friends. Coarse flattery moves the  
gorge : 270

Mine were the mode to awe the many, George!  
They guess you half despise them while most bent  
On demonstrating that your sole intent  
Strives for their service. Sneer at them? Yourself  
'T is you disparage,—tricksy as an elf, 275

Scorning what most you strain to bring to pass,  
Laughingly careless,—triplly cased in brass,—  
While pushing strenuous to the end in view.  
What follows? Why, you formulate within  
The vulgar headpiece this conception "Win 280  
A master-mind to serve us needs we must,

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

One who, from motives we but take on trust,  
Acts strangelier—haply wiselier than we know—  
Stronglier, for certain. Did he say ‘I throw  
Aside my good for yours, in all I do 285  
Care nothing for myself and all for you’—  
We should both understand and disbelieve :  
Said he ‘Your good I laugh at in my sleeve,  
My own it is I solely labour at,  
Pretending yours the while’—that, even that 290  
We, understanding well, give credence to,  
And so will none of it. But here ’t is through  
Our recognition of his service, wage  
Well earned by work, he mounts to such a stage  
Above competitors as all save Bubb 295  
Would agonize to keep. Yet,—here ’s the rub—  
So slightly does he hold by our esteem  
Which solely fixed him fast there, that we seem  
Mocked every minute to our face, by gibe  
And jest—scorn insuppressive : what ascribe 300  
The rashness to? Our pay and praise to boot—  
Do these avail him to tread underfoot  
Something inside us all and each, that stands  
Somehow instead of somewhat which commands  
‘Lie not’? Folk fear to jeopardize their soul, 305  
Stumble at times, walk straight upon the whole,—  
That ’s nature’s simple instinct : what may be  
The portent here, the influence such as we  
Are strangers to?”—

### VII

Exact the thing I call  
Man’s despot, just the Supernatural 310  
Which, George, was wholly out of—far beyond  
Your theory and practice. You had conned  
But to reject the precept “To succeed  
In gratifying selfishness and greed,

## GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

Asseverate such qualities exist 315  
Nowise within yourself! then make acquist  
By all means, with no sort of fear!" Alack,  
That well-worn lie is obsolete! Fall back  
On still a working pretext—"Hearth and Home,  
The Altar, love of England, hate of Rome"— 320  
That 's serviceable lying—that perchance  
Had screened you decently: but 'ware advance  
By one step more in perspicacity  
Of these our dupes! At length they get to see  
As through the earlier, this the latter plea— 325  
And find the greed and selfishness at source!  
*Ventum est ad triarios*: last resource  
Should be to what but—exquisite disguise  
Disguise-abjuring, truth that looks like lies,  
Frankness so sure to meet with unbelief? 330  
Say—you hold in contempt—not them in chief—  
But first and foremost your own self! No use  
In men but to make sport for you, induce  
The puppets now to dance, now stand stock-still,  
Now knock their heads together, at your will 335  
For will's sake only—while each plays his part  
Submissive: why? through terror at the heart:  
"Can it be—this bold man, whose hand we saw  
Openly pull the wires, obeys some law  
Quite above Man's—nay, God's?" On face fall 340  
they.  
This was the secret missed, again I say,  
Out of your power to grasp conception of,  
Much less employ to purpose. Hence the scoff  
That greets your very name: folk see but one  
Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington. 345

## WITH FRANCIS FURINI

### I

NAY, *that*, Furini, never I at least  
Mean to believe! What man you were I know,  
While you walked Tuscan earth, a painter-priest,  
Something about two hundred years ago.  
Priest—you did duty punctual as the sun 5  
That rose and set above Saint Sano's church,  
Blessing Mugello : of your flock not one  
But showed a whiter fleece because of smirch,  
Your kind hands wiped it clear from : were they  
poor?

Bounty broke bread apace,—did marriage lag 10  
For just the want of moneys that ensure  
Fit hearth-and-home provision?—straight your  
bag  
Unplumped itself,—reached hearts by way of  
palms

Goodwill's shake had but tickled. All about  
Mugello valley, felt some parish qualms 15  
At worship offered in bare walls without  
The comfort of a picture?—prompt such need  
Our painter would supply, and throngs to see  
Witnessed that goodness—no unholy greed  
Of gain—had coaxed from Don Furini—he 20  
Whom princes might in vain implore to toil  
For worldly profit—such a masterpiece.  
Brief—priest, you poured profuse God's wine and  
oil

Praiseworthily, I know : shall praising cease



## FRANCIS FURINI

When, priestly vesture put aside, mere man, 25  
You stand for judgment? Rather—what acclaim  
—"Good son, good brother, friend in whom we  
scan

No fault nor flaw"—salutes Furini's name,  
The loving as the liberal! Enough :  
Only to ope a lily, though for sake 30

Of setting free its scent, disturbs the rough  
Loose gold about its anther. I shall take  
No blame in one more blazon, last of all—  
Good painter were you : if in very deed

I styled you great—what modern art dares call 35  
My word in question? Let who will take heed  
Of what he seeks and misses in your brain  
To balance that precision of the brush

Your hand could ply so deftly : all in vain  
Strives poet's power for outlet when the push 40  
Is lost upon a barred and bolted gate  
Of painter's impotency. Agnolo—

Thine were alike the head and hand, by fate  
Doubly endowed! Who boasts head only—woe  
To hand's presumption should brush emulate 45

Fancy's free passage by the pen, and show  
Thought wrecked and ruined where the inexpert  
Foolhardy fingers half grasped, half let go

Film-wings the poet's pen arrests unhurt!  
No—painter such as that miraculous 50  
Michael, who deems you? But the ample gift  
Of gracing walls else blank of this our house

Of life with imagery, one bright drift  
Poured forth by pencil,—man and woman mere,  
Glorified till half owned for gods,—the dear 55

Fleshly perfection of the human shape,—  
This was apportioned you whereby to praise  
Heaven and bless earth. Who clumsily essays,

By slighting painter's craft, to prove the ape

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Of poet's pen-creation, just betrays  
Two-fold ineptitude.

60

### II

By such sure ways

Do I return, Furini, to my first  
And central confidence—that he I proved  
Good priest, good man, good painter, and rehearsed  
Praise upon praise to show—not simply loved 65  
For virtue, but for wisdom honoured too  
Needs must Furini be,—it follows—who  
Shall undertake to breed in me belief  
That, on his death-bed, weakness played the thief  
With wisdom, folly ousted reason quite? 70  
List to the chronicler! With main and might—  
So fame runs—did the poor soul beg his friends  
To buy and burn his hand-work, make amends  
For having reproduced therein—(Ah me!  
Sighs fame—that 's friend Filippo)—nudity! 75  
Yes, I assure you: he would paint—not men  
Merely—a pardonable fault—but when  
He had to deal with—oh, not mother Eve  
Alone, permissibly in Paradise  
Naked and unashamed,—but dared achieve 80  
Dreadful distinction, at soul-safety's price  
By also painting women—(why the need?)  
Just as God made them: there, you have the truth!  
Yes, rosed from top to toe in flush of youth,  
One foot upon the moss-fringe, would some Nymph 85  
Try, with its venturous fellow, if the lymph  
Were chillier than the slab-stepped fountain-edge;  
The while a-heap her garments on its ledge  
Of boulder lay within hand's easy reach,  
—No one least kid-skin cast around her! Speech 90  
Shrinks from enumerating case and case  
Of—were it but Diana at the chase,

## FRANCIS FURINI

With tunic tucked discreetly hunting-high !  
No, some Queen Venus set our necks awry,  
Turned faces from the painter's all-too-frank 95  
Triumph of flesh ! For—whom had he to thank  
—This self-appointed nature-student ? Whence  
Picked he up practice ? By what evidence  
Did he unhandsomely become adept  
In simulating bodies ? How except 100  
By actual sight of such ? Himself confessed  
The enormity : quoth Philip “ When I pressed  
The painter to acknowledge his abuse  
Of artistry else potent—what excuse  
Made the infatuated man ? I give 105  
His very words : ‘ Did you but know, as I,  
—O scruple-splitting sickly-sensitive  
Mild-moral-monger, what the agony  
Of Art is ere Art satisfy herself  
In imitating Nature—(Man, poor elf, 110  
Striving to match the finger-mark of Him  
The immeasurably matchless)—gay or grim,  
Pray, would your smile be ? Leave mere fools to tax  
Art's high-strung brain's intentness as so lax  
That, in its mid-throe, idle fancy sees 115  
The moment for admittance ! ’ Pleadings these—  
Specious, I grant.” So adds, and seems to wince  
Somewhat, our censor—but shall truth convince  
Blockheads like Baldinucci ?

### III

I resume

My incredulity : your other kind 120  
Of soul, Furini, never was so blind,  
Even through death-mist, as to grope in gloom  
For cheer beside a bonfire piled to turn  
Ashes and dust all that your noble life  
Did homage to life's Lord by,—bid them burn 125

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

—These Baldinucci blockheads—pictures rife  
With record, in each rendered loveliness,  
That one appreciative creature's debt  
Of thanks to the Creator more or less,  
Was paid according as heart's-will had met 130  
Hand's-power in Art's endeavour to express  
Heaven's most consummate of achievements,  
bless

Earth by a semblance of the seal God set  
On woman his supremest work. I trust  
Rather, Furini, dying breath had vent 135  
In some fine fervour of thanksgiving just  
For this—that soul and body's power you spent—  
Agonized to adumbrate, trace in dust  
That marvel which we dream the firmament  
Copies in star-device when fancies stray 140  
Outlining, orb by orb, Andromeda—  
God's best of beauteous and magnificent  
Revealed to earth—the naked female form.  
Nay, I mistake not: wrath that 's but luke-  
warm

Would boil indeed were such a critic styled 145  
Himself an artist: artist! Ossa piled  
Topping Olympus—the absurd which crowns  
The extravagant—whereat one laughs, not frowns.  
Paints he? One bids the poor pretender take  
His sorry self, a trouble and disgrace, 150  
From out the sacred presence, void the place  
Artists claim only. What—not merely wake  
Our pity that suppressed concupiscence—  
A satyr masked as matron—makes pretence  
To the coarse blue-fly's instinct—can perceive 155  
No better reason why she should exist—  
—God's lily-limbed and blush-rose-bosomed  
Eve—

Than as a hot-bed for the sensualist

## FRANCIS FURINI

To fly-blow with his fancies, make pure stuff  
Breed him back filth—this were not crime enough? 165  
But further—fly to style itself—nay, more—  
To steal among the sacred ones, crouch down  
Though but to where their garments sweep the  
floor—

—Still catching some faint sparkle from the  
crown

Crowning transcendent Michael, Leonard, 165  
Rafael,—to sit beside the feet of such,  
Unspurned because unnoticed, then reward  
Their toleration—mercy overmuch—

By stealing from the throne-step to the fools  
Curious outside the gateway, all-agape 170

To learn by what procedure, in the schools  
Of Art, a merest man in outward shape  
May learn to be Correggio! Old and young,  
These learners got their lesson : Art was just  
A safety-screen—(Art, which Correggio's tongue 175  
Calls "Virtue")—for a skulking vice : mere lust  
Inspired the artist when his Night and Morn  
Slept and awoke in marble on that edge

Of heaven above our awestruck earth : lust-born  
His Eve low bending took the privilege 180  
Of life from what our eyes saw—God's own palm  
That put the flame forth—to the love and thanks  
Of all creation save this recreant !

### IV

#### Calm

Our phrase, Furini ! Not the artist-ranks  
Claim riddance of an interloper : no— 185  
This Baldinucci did but grunt and sniff  
Outside Art's pale—ay, grubbed, where pine-trees  
grow,

For pignuts only.

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

V

You the Sacred ! If

Indeed on you has been bestowed the dower  
Of Art in fulness, graced with head and hand, 190  
Head—to look up not downwards, hand—of power  
To make head's gain the portion of a world  
Where else the uninstructed ones too sure  
Would take all outside beauty—film that 's furled  
About a star—for the star's self, endure 195  
No guidance to the central glory,—nay,  
(Sadder) might apprehend the film was fog,  
Or (worst) wish all but vapour well away,  
And sky's pure product thickened from earth's  
bog—

Since so, nor seldom, have your worthiest failed 200  
To trust their own soul's insight—why? except  
For warning that the head of the adept  
May too much prize the hand, work unassailed  
By scruple of the better sense that finds  
An orb within each halo, bids gross flesh 205  
Free the fine spirit-pattern, nor enmesh  
More than is meet a marvel custom blinds  
Only the vulgar eye to. Now, less fear  
That you, the foremost of Art's fellowship,  
Will oft—will ever so offend ! But—hip 210  
And thigh—smite the Philistine ! *You*—slunk  
here—

Connived at, by too easy tolerance,  
Not to scrape palette simply or squeeze brush,  
But dub your very self an Artist ? Tush—  
You, of the daubings, is it, dare advance 215  
This doctrine that the Artist-mind must needs  
Own to affinity with yours—confess  
Provocative acquaintance, more or less,  
With each impurely-peevisish worm that breeds  
Inside your brain's receptacle ?

## FRANCIS FURINI

### VI

Enough. 220  
Who owns "I dare not look on diadems  
Without an itch to pick out, purloin gems  
Others contentedly leave sparkling"—gruff  
Answers the guard of the regalia: "Why—  
Consciously kleptomaniac—thrust yourself 225  
Where your illicit craving after pelf  
Is tempted most—in the King's treasury?  
Go elsewhere! Sort with thieves, if thus you  
feel—  
When folk clean-handed simply recognize  
Treasure whereof the mere sight satisfies— 230  
But straight your fingers are on itch to steal!  
Hence with you!"

Pray, Furini!

### VII

"Bounteous God,  
Deviser and Dispenser of all gifts  
To soul through sense,—in Art the soul uplifts  
Man's best of thanks! What but Thy measuring-  
rod 235  
Meted forth heaven and earth? more intimate,  
Thy very hands were busied with the task  
Of making, in this human shape, a mask—  
A match for that divine. Shall love abate  
Man's wonder? Nowise! True—true—all too  
true— 240  
No gift but, in the very plenitude  
Of its perfection, goes maimed, misconstrued  
By wickedness or weakness: still, some few  
Have grace to see Thy purpose, strength to mar  
Thy work by no admixture of their own, 245  
—Limn truth not falsehood, bid us love alone  
The type untampered with, the naked star!"

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

### VIII

And, prayer done, painter—what if you should  
preach?  
Not as of old when playing pulpiteer  
To simple-witted country folk, but here 250  
In actual London try your powers of speech  
On us the cultured, therefore sceptical—  
What would you? For, suppose he has his word  
In faith's behalf, no matter how absurd,  
This painter-theologian? One and all 255  
We lend an ear—nay, Science takes thereto—  
Encourages the meanest who has racked  
Nature until he gains from her some fact,  
To state what truth is from his point of view,  
Mere pin-point though it be : since many such 260  
Conduce to make a whole, she bids our friend  
Come forward unabashed and haply lend  
His little life-experience to our much  
Of modern knowledge. Since she so insists,  
Up stands Furini.

### IX

“ Evolutionists ! 265  
At truth I glimpse from depths, you glance from  
heights,  
Our stations for discovery opposites,—  
How should ensue agreement? I explain :  
'T is the tip-top of things to which you strain  
Your vision, until atoms, protoplasm, 270  
And what and whence and how may be the spasm  
Which sets all going, stop you : down perforce  
Needs must your observation take its course,  
Since there 's no moving upwards : link by link  
You drop to where the atoms somehow think, 275  
Feel, know themselves to be : the world 's begun,  
Such as we recognize it. Have you done



## FRANCIS FURINI

Descending? Here 's ourself,—Man, known to-day,

Duly evolved at last,—so far, you say,  
The sum and seal of being's progress. Good! 280

Thus much at least is clearly understood—  
Of power does Man possess no particle :  
Of knowledge—just so much as shows that still  
It ends in ignorance on every side :

But righteousness—ah, Man is deified 285

Thereby, for compensation! Make survey

Of Man's surroundings, try creation—nay,

Try emulation of the minimized

Minuteness fancy may conceive! Surprised

Reason becomes by two defeats for one— 290

Not only power at each phenomenon

Baffled, but knowledge also in default—

Asking what *is* minuteness—yonder vault

Speckled with suns, or this the millionth—thing, 295

How shall I call?—that on some insect's wing

Helps to make out in dyes the mimic star?

Weak, ignorant, accordingly we are :

What then? The worse for Nature! Where  
began

Righteousness, moral sense except in Man?

True, he makes nothing, understands no whit: 300

Had the initiator-spasm seen fit

Thus doubly to endow him, none the worse

And much the better were the universe.

What does Man see or feel or apprehend

Here, there, and everywhere, but faults to mend, 305

Omissions to supply,—one wide disease

Of things that are, which Man at once would ease

Had will but power and knowledge? failing

both—

Things must take will for deed—Man, nowise loth,

Accepts pre-eminency : mere blind force— 310

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Mere knowledge undirected in its course  
By any care for what is made or marred  
In either's operation—*these* award  
The crown to? Rather let it deck thy brows,  
Man, whom alone a righteousness endows 315  
Would cure the wide world's ailing! Who disputes  
Thy claim thereto? Had Spasm more attributes  
Than power and knowledge in its gift, before  
Man came to pass? The higher that we soar,  
The less of moral sense like Man's we find : 320  
No sign of such before,—what comes behind,  
Who guesses? But until there crown our sight  
The quite new—not the old mere infinite  
Of changings,—some fresh kind of sun and  
moon,—  
Then, not before, shall I expect a boon 325  
Of intuition just as strange, which turns  
Evil to good, and wrong to right, unlearns  
All Man's experience learned since Man was he.  
Accept in Man, advanced to this degree,  
The Prime Mind, therefore! neither wise nor  
strong— 330  
Whose fault? but were he both, then right, not  
wrong  
As now, throughout the world were paramount  
According to his will,—which I account  
The qualifying faculty. He stands  
Confessed supreme—the monarch whose com-  
mands 335  
Could he enforce, how bettered were the world!  
He 's at the height this moment—to be hurled  
Next moment to the bottom by rebound  
Of his own peal of laughter. All around  
Ignorance wraps him,—whence and how and why 340  
Things are,—yet cloud breaks and lets blink the  
sky

## FRANCIS FURINI

Just overhead, not elsewhere ! What assures  
His optics that the very blue which lures  
Comes not of black outside it, doubly dense ?  
Ignorance overwraps his moral sense, 345  
Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,  
So much and no more than lets through perhaps  
The murmured knowledge—' Ignorance exists.'

### X

" I at the bottom, Evolutionists,  
Advise beginning, rather. I profess 350  
To know just one fact—my self-consciousness,—  
'Twixt ignorance and ignorance enisled,—  
Knowledge : before me was my Cause—that 's  
    styled

God : after, in due course succeeds the rest,—  
All that my knowledge comprehends—at best— 355  
At worst, conceives about in mild despair.  
Light needs must touch on either darkness :  
    where ?

Knowledge so far impinges on the Cause  
Before me, that I know—by certain laws  
Wholly unknown, whate'er I apprehend 360  
Within, without me, had its rise : thus blend  
I, and all things perceived, in one Effect.  
How far can knowledge any ray project  
On what comes after me—the universe ?  
Well, my attempt to make the cloud disperse 365  
Begins—not from above but underneath :  
I climb, you soar,—who soars soon loses breath  
And sinks, who climbs keeps one foot firm on fact  
Ere hazarding the next step : soul's first act  
(Call consciousness the soul—some name we need) 370  
Getting itself aware, through stuff decreed  
Thereto (so call the body)—who has stept  
So far, there let him stand, become adept

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

In body ere he shift his station thence  
One single hair's breadth. Do I make pretence 375  
To teach, myself unskilled in learning? Lo,  
My life's work! Let my pictures prove I know  
Somewhat of what this fleshly frame of ours  
Or is or should be, how the soul empowers  
The body to reveal its every mood 380  
Of love and hate, pour forth its plenitude  
Of passion. If my hand attained to give  
Thus permanence to truth else fugitive,  
Did not I also fix each fleeting grace  
Of form and feature—save the beauteous face— 385  
Arrest decay in transitory might  
Of bone and muscle—cause the world to bless  
For ever each transcendent nakedness  
Of man and woman? Were such feats achieved  
By sloth, or strenuous labour unrelieved, 390  
—Yet lavished vainly? Ask that underground  
(So may I speak) of all on surface found  
Of flesh-perfection! Depths on depths to probe  
Of all-inventive artifice, disrobe  
Marvel at hiding under marvel, pluck 395  
Veil after veil from Nature—were the luck  
Ours to surprise the secret men so name,  
That still eludes the searcher—all the same,  
Repays his search with still fresh proof—' Externe,  
Not inmost, is the Cause, fool! Look and learn!' 400  
Thus teach my hundred pictures: firm and fast  
There did I plant my first foot. And the next?  
Nowhere! 'T was put forth and withdrawn, per-  
plexed  
At touch of what seemed stable and proved stuff  
Such as the coloured clouds are: plain enough 405  
There lay the outside universe: try Man—  
My most immediate! and the dip began  
From safe and solid into that profound

## FRANCIS FURINI

Of ignorance I tell you surges round  
My rock-spit of self-knowledge. Well and ill, 410  
Evil and good irreconcilable  
Above, beneath, about my every side,—  
How did this wild confusion far and wide  
Tally with my experience when my stamp—  
So far from stirring—struck out, each a lamp, 415  
Spark after spark of truth from where I stood—  
Pedestalled triumph? Evil there was good,  
Want was the promise of supply, defect  
Ensured completion,—where and when and how?  
Leave that to the First Cause! Enough that now, 420  
Here where I stand, this moment's me and mine,  
Shows me what is, permits me to divine  
What shall be. Wherefore? Nay, how otherwise?  
Look at my pictures! What so glorifies  
The body that the permeating soul 425  
Finds there no particle elude control  
Direct, or fail of duty,—most obscure  
When most subservient? Did that Cause ensure  
The soul such raptures as its fancy stings  
Body to furnish when, uplift by wings 430  
Of passion, here and now, it leaves the earth,  
Loses itself above, where bliss has birth—  
(Heaven, be the phrase)—did that same Cause  
contrive  
Such solace for the body, soul must dive  
At drop of fancy's pinion, condescend 435  
To bury both alike on earth, our friend  
And fellow, where minutely exquisite  
Low lie the pleasures, now and here—no herb  
But hides its marvel, peace no doubts perturb  
In each small mystery of insect life— 440  
—Shall the soul's Cause thus gift the soul, yet  
strife  
Continue still of fears with hopes,—for why?

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

What if the Cause, whereof we now descry  
So far the wonder-working, lack at last  
Will, power, benevolence—a protoplast, 445  
No consummator, sealing up the sum  
Of all things,—past and present and to come  
Perfection? No, I have no doubt at all!  
There's my amount of knowledge—great or small,  
Sufficient for my needs: for see! advance 450  
Its light now on that depth of ignorance  
I shrank before from—yonder where the world  
Lies wreck-strewn,—evil towering, prone good—  
hurled  
From pride of place, on every side. For me  
(Patience, beseech you!) knowledge can but be 455  
Of good by knowledge of good's opposite—  
Evil,—since, to distinguish wrong from right,  
Both must be known in each extreme, beside—  
(Or what means knowledge—to aspire or bide  
Content with half-attaining? Hardly so!) 460  
Made to know on, know ever, I must know  
All to be known at any halting-stage  
Of my soul's progress, such as earth, where wage  
War, just for soul's instruction, pain with joy,  
Folly with wisdom, all that works annoy 465  
With all that quiets and contents,—in brief,  
Good strives with evil.

“Now then for relief,  
Friends, of your patience kindly curbed so long.  
'What?' snarl you, 'Is the fool's conceit thus  
strong—

Must the whole outside world in soul and sense 470  
Suffer, that he grow sage at its expense?'  
By no means! 'T is by merest touch of toe  
I try—not trench on—ignorance, just know—  
And so keep steady footing: how you fare,

## FRANCIS FURINI

Caught in the whirlpool—that 's the Cause's care, 475  
Strong, wise, good,—this I know at any rate  
In my own self,—but how may operate  
With you—strength, wisdom, goodness—no least  
blink  
Of knowledge breaks the darkness round me.  
Think!

Could I see plain, be somehow certified 480  
All was illusion,—evil far and wide  
Was good disguised,—why, out with one huge wipe  
Goes knowledge from me. Type needs antitype :  
As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good  
Needs evil : how were pity understood 485  
Unless by pain? Make evident that pain  
Permissibly masks pleasure—you abstain  
From outstretch of the finger-tip that saves  
A drowning fly. Who proffers help of hand  
To weak Andromeda exposed on strand 490  
At mercy of the monster? Were all true,  
Help were not wanting : ' But 't is false,' cry you,  
' Mere fancy-work of paint and brush !' No less,  
Were mine the skill, the magic, to impress  
Beholders with a confidence they saw 495  
Life,—veritable flesh and blood in awe  
Of just as true a sea-beast,—would they stare  
Simply as now, or cry out, curse and swear,  
Or call the gods to help, or catch up stick  
And stone, according as their hearts were quick 500  
Or sluggish? Well, some old artificer  
Could do as much,—at least, so books aver,—  
Able to make-believe, while I, poor wight,  
Make-fancy, nothing more. Though wrong were  
right,  
Could we but know—still wrong must needs seem  
wrong 505  
To do right's service, prove men weak or strong,

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Choosers of evil or of good. 'No such  
Illusion possible!' Ah, friends, you touch  
Just here my solid standing-place amid  
The wash and welter, whence all doubts are bid 510  
Back to the ledge they break against in foam,  
Futility: my soul, and my soul's home  
This body,—how each operates on each,  
And how things outside, fact or feigning, teach  
What good is and what evil,—just the same, 515  
Be feigning or be fact the teacher,—blame  
Diffidence nowise if, from this I judge  
My point of vantage, not an inch I budge.  
All—for myself—seems ordered wise and well  
Inside it,—what reigns outside, who can tell? 520  
Contrariwise, who needs be told 'The space  
Which yields thee knowledge,—do its bounds  
embrace  
Well-willing and wise-working, each at height?  
Enough: beyond thee lies the infinite—  
Back to thy circumscription!'

"Back indeed! 525

Ending where I began—thus: retrocede,  
Who will,—what comes first, take first, I advise!  
Acquaint you with the body ere your eyes  
Look upward: this Andromeda of mine—  
Gaze on the beauty, Art hangs out for sign 530  
There's finer entertainment underneath.  
Learn how they ministrate to life and death—  
Those incommensurably marvellous  
Contrivances which furnish forth the house  
Where soul has sway! Though Master keep aloof, 535  
Signs of His presence multiply from roof  
To basement of the building. Look around,  
Learn thoroughly,—no fear that you confound  
Master with message! He's away, no doubt,



## FRANCIS FURINI

But what if, all at once, you come upon 540  
A startling proof—not that the Master gone  
Was present lately—but that something—whence  
Light comes—has pushed Him into residence?  
Was such the symbol's meaning,—old, uncouth—  
That circle of the serpent, tail in mouth? 545  
Only by looking low, ere looking high,  
Comes penetration of the mystery."

### XI

Thanks! After sermonizing, psalmody!  
Now praise with pencil, Painter! Fools attain 550  
Your fame, forsooth, because its power inclines  
To livelier colours, more attractive lines  
Than suit some orthodox sad sickly saint  
—Grey male emaciation, haply streaked  
Carmine by scourgings—or they want, far worse—  
Some self-scathed woman, framed to bless not curse 555  
Nature that loved the form whereon hate wreaked  
The wrongs you see. No, rather paint some full  
Benignancy, the first and foremost boon  
Of youth, health, strength,—show beauty's May,  
ere June  
Undo the bud's blush, leave a rose to cull 560  
—No poppy, neither! yet less perfect-pure,  
Divinely-precious with life's dew besprent.  
Show saintliness that 's simply innocent  
Of guessing sinnership exists to cure.  
All in good time! In time let age advance 565  
And teach that knowledge helps—not ignorance—  
The healing of the nations. Let my spark  
Quicken your tinder! Burn with—Joan of Arc!  
Not at the end, nor midway when there grew  
The brave delusions, when rare fancies flew 570  
Before the eyes, and in the ears of her  
Strange voices woke imperiously astir:

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

No,—paint the peasant girl all peasant-like,  
Spirit and flesh—the hour about to strike  
When this should be transfigured, that inflamed, 575  
By heart's admonishing "Thy country shamed,  
Thy king shut out of all his realm except  
One sorry corner!" and to life forth leapt  
The indubitable lightning "Can there be  
Country and king's salvation—all through me?" 580  
Memorize that burst's moment, Francis! Tush—  
None of the nonsense-writing! Fitlier brush  
Shall clear off fancy's film-work and let show  
Not what the foolish feign but the wise know—  
Ask Sainte-Beuve else!—or better, Quicherat, 585  
The downright-digger into truth that's—Bah,  
Bettered by fiction? Well, of fact thus much  
Concerns you, that "of prudishness no touch  
From first to last defaced the maid; anon,  
Camp-use compelling"—what says D'Alençon 590  
Her fast friend?—"though I saw while she un-  
dressed

How fair she was—especially her breast—  
Never had I a wild thought!"—as indeed  
I nowise doubt. Much less would she take heed—  
When eve came, and the lake, the hills around 595  
Were all one solitude and silence,—found  
Barriered impenetrably safe about,—  
Take heed of interloping eyes shut out,  
But quietly permit the air imbibe  
Her naked beauty till . . . but hear the scribe! 600  
*Now as she fain would bathe, one even-tide,  
God's maid, this Joan, from the pool's edge she spied  
The fair blue bird clowns call the Fisher-king:  
And "Las," sighed she, "my Liege is such a thing  
As thou, lord but of one poor lonely place 605  
Out of his whole wide France: were mine the grace  
To set my Dauphin free as thou, blue bird!"*

## FRANCIS FURINI

Properly Martin-fisher—that 's the word,  
Not yours nor mine : folk said the rustic oath  
In common use with her was—"By my troth" ? 610  
No,—“By my Martin”! Paint this! Only, turn  
Her face away—that face about to burn  
Into an angel's when the time is ripe!  
That task 's beyond you. Finished, Francis?

Wipe  
Pencil, scrape palette, and retire content ! 615  
“*Omnia non omnibus*”—no harm is meant !

## WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE

### I

AN, but—because you were struck blind, could bless  
Your sense no longer with the actual view  
Of man and woman, those fair forms you drew  
In happier days so duteously and true,—  
Must I account my Gerard de Lairesse 5  
All sorrow-smitten? He was hindered too  
—Was this no hardship?—from producing, plain  
To us who still have eyes, the pageantry  
Which passed and passed before his busy brain  
And, captured on his canvas, showed our sky 10  
Traversed by flying shapes, earth stocked with  
brood  
Of monsters,—centaurs bestial, satyrs lewd,—  
Not without much Olympian glory, shapes  
Of god and goddess in their gay escapes  
From the severe serene : or haply paced 15  
The antique ways, god-counselled, nymph-em-  
braced,  
Some early human kingly personage.  
Such wonders of the teeming poet's-age  
Were still to be : nay, these indeed began—  
Are not the pictures extant?—till the ban 20  
Of blindness struck both palette from his thumb  
And pencil from his finger.

### II

Blind—not dumb,  
Else, Gerard, were my inmost bowels stirred  
With pity beyond pity : no, the word

## GERARD DE LAIRESSE

Was left upon your unmolested lips : 25  
 Your mouth unsealed, despite of eyes' eclipse,  
 Talked all brain's yearning into birth. I lack  
 Somehow the heart to wish your practice back  
 Which boasted hand's achievement in a score  
 Of veritable pictures, less or more, 30  
 Still to be seen : myself have seen them,—moved  
 To pay due homage to the man I loved  
 Because of that prodigious book he wrote  
 On Artistry's Ideal, by taking note,  
 Making acquaintance with his artist-work. 35  
 So my youth's piety obtained success  
 Of all-too dubious sort : for, though it irk  
 To tell the issue, few or none would guess  
 From extant lines and colours, De Laïresse,  
 Your faculty, although each deftly-grouped 40  
 And aptly-ordered figure-piece was judged  
 Worthy a prince's purchase in its day.  
 Bearded experience bears not to be duped  
 Like boyish fancy : 't was a boy that budged  
 No foot's breadth from your visioned steps away 45  
 The while that memorable "Walk" he trudged  
 In your companionship,—the Book must say  
 Where, when and whither,—"Walk," come what  
     come may,  
 No measurer of steps on this our globe  
 Shall ever match for marvels. Faustus' robe, 50  
 And Fortunatus' cap were gifts of price :  
 But—oh, your piece of sober sound advice  
 That artists should descry abundant worth  
 In trivial commonplace, nor groan at dearth  
 If fortune bade the painter's craft be plied 55  
 In vulgar town and country ! Why despond  
 Because hemmed round by Dutch canals? Be-  
     yond  
 The ugly actual, lo, on every side

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Imagination's limitless domain  
Displayed a wealth of wondrous sounds and sights 60  
Ripe to be realized by poet's brain  
Acting on painter's brush ! "Ye doubt? Poor  
wights,  
What if I set example, go before,  
While you come after, and we both explore  
Holland turned Dreamland, taking care to note 65  
Objects whereto my pupils may devote  
Attention with advantage?"

### III

So commenced  
That "Walk" amid true wonders—none to you,  
But huge to us ignobly common-sensed,  
Purblind, while plain could proper optics view 70  
In that old sepulchre by lightning split,  
Whereof the lid bore carven,—any dolt  
Imagines why,—Jove's very thunderbolt ;  
You who could straight perceive, by glance at it,  
This tomb must needs be Phaeton's ! In a trice, 75  
Confirming that conjecture, close on hand,  
Behold, half out, half in the ploughed-up sand,  
A chariot-wheel explained its bolt-device ;  
What other than the Chariot of the Sun  
Ever let drop the like? Consult the tome—<sup>1</sup> 80  
I bid inglorious tarriers-at-home—  
For greater still surprise the while that "Walk"  
Went on and on, to end as it begun,  
Choke-full of chances, changes, every one  
No whit less wondrous. What was there to  
balk 85  
Us, who had eyes, from seeing? You with none  
Missed not a marvel : wherefore? Let us talk.

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of Painting, &c.*, by Gerard de Lairese. Translated by J. F. Fritsch. 1778.

## GERARD DE LAIRESSE

### IV

Say am I right? Your sealed sense moved your mind,  
Free from obstruction, to compassionate  
Art's power left powerless, and supply the blind 90  
With fancies worth all facts denied by fate.  
Mind could invent things, add to—take away,  
At pleasure, leave out trifles mean and base  
Which vex the sight that cannot say them nay  
But, where mind plays the master, have no place. 95  
And bent on banishing was mind, be sure,  
All except beauty from its mustered tribe  
Of objects apparitional which lure  
Painter to show and poet to describe—  
That imagery of the antique song 100  
Truer than truth's self. Fancy's rainbow-birth  
Conceived mid clouds in Greece, could glance along  
Your passage o'er Dutch veritable earth,  
As with ourselves, who see, familiar throng  
About our paces men and women worth 105  
Nowise a glance—so poets apprehend—  
Since nought avails portraying them in verse :  
While painters turn upon the heel, intend  
To spare their work the critic's ready curse  
Due to the daily and undignified. 110

### V

I who myself contentedly abide  
Awake, nor want the wings of dream,—who tramp  
Earth's common surface, rough, smooth, dry or  
damp,  
—I understand alternatives, no less  
—Conceive your soul's leap, Gerard de Lairese ! 115  
How were it could I mingle false with true,  
Boast, with the sights I see, your vision too?  
Advantage would it prove or detriment

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

If I saw double? Could I gaze intent  
On Dryope plucking the blossoms red, 120  
As you, whereat her lote-tree writhed and bled,  
Yet lose no gain, no hard fast wide-awake  
Having and holding nature for the sake  
Of nature only—nymph and lote-tree thus  
Gained by the loss of fruit not fabulous, 125  
Apple of English homesteads, where I see  
Nor seek more than crisp buds a struggling bee  
Uncrumples, caught by sweethe clambers through?  
Truly, a moot point: make it plain to me,  
Who, bee-like, sate sense with the simply true, 130  
Nor seek to heighten that sufficiency  
By help of feignings proper to the page—  
Earth's surface-blank whereon the elder age  
Put colour, poetizing—poured rich life  
On what were else a dead ground—nothingness— 135  
Until the solitary world grew rife  
With Joves and Junos, nymphs and satyrs. Yes,  
The reason was, fancy composed the strife  
'Twixt sense and soul: for sense, my De Lairese,  
Cannot content itself with outward things, 140  
Mere beauty: soul must needs know whence  
there springs—  
How, when and why—what sense but loves, nor  
lists  
To know at all.

### VI

Not one of man's acquists  
Ought he resignedly to lose, methinks:  
So, point me out which was it of the links 145  
Snapt first, from out the chain which used to bind  
Our earth to heaven, and yet for you, since blind,  
Subsisted still efficient and intact?  
Oh, we can fancy too! but somehow fact



## GERARD DE LAIRESSE

Has got to—say, not so much push aside 150  
Fancy, as to declare its place supplied  
By fact unseen but no less fact the same,  
Which mind bids' sense accept. Is mind to blame,  
Or sense,—does that usurp, this abdicate?  
First of all, as you “walked”—were it too late 155  
For us to walk, if so we willed? Confess  
We have the sober feet still, De Lairese!  
Why not the freakish brain too, that must needs  
Supplement nature—not see flowers and weeds  
Simply as such, but link with each and all 160  
The ultimate perfection—what we call  
Rightly enough the human shape divine?  
The rose? No rose unless it disentwine  
From Venus' wreath the while she bends to  
kiss  
Her deathly love?

### VII

Plain retrogression, this! 165  
No, no: we poets go not back at all:  
What you did we could do—from great to small  
Sinking assuredly: if this world last  
One moment longer when Man finds its Past  
Exceed its Present—blame the Protoplast! 170  
If we no longer see as you of old,  
'T is we see deeper. Progress for the bold!  
You saw the body, 't is the soul we see.  
Try now! Bear witness while you walk with me,  
I see as you: if we loose arms, stop pace, 175  
'T is that you stand still, I conclude the race  
Without your company. Come, walk once more  
The “Walk”: if I to-day as you of yore  
See just like you the blind—then sight shall cry  
—The whole long day quite gone through—  
victory! 180

# PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

## VIII

Thunders on thunders, doubling and redoubling  
Doom o'er the mountain, while a sharp white  
fire

Now shone, now sheared its rusty herbage,  
troubling

Hardly the fir-boles, now discharged its ire  
Full where some pine-tree's solitary spire 185

Crashed down, defiant to the last : till—lo,

The motive of the malice !—all a-glow,

Circled with flame there yawned a sudden rift

I' the rock-face, and I saw a form erect

Front and defy the outrage, while—as checked, 190

Chidden, beside him dauntless in the drift—

Cowered a heaped creature, wing and wing out-  
spread

In deprecation o'er the crouching head

Still hungry for the feast foregone awhile.

O thou, of scorn's unconquerable smile, 195

Was it when this—Jove's feathered fury—slipped

Gore-glutted from the heart's core whence he  
ripped—

This eagle-hound—neither reproach nor prayer—

Baffled, in one more fierce attempt to tear

Fate's secret from thy safeguard,—was it then 200

That all these thunders rent earth, ruined air

To reach thee, pay thy patronage of men ?

He thundered,—to withdraw, as beast to lair,

Before the triumph on thy pallid brow.

Gather the night again about thee now, 205

Hate on, love ever ! Morn is breaking there—

The granite ridge pricks through the mist, turns  
gold

As wrong turns right. O laughs manifold

Of ocean's ripple at dull earth's despair !

# GERARD DE LAIRESSE

## IX

But morning's laugh sets all the crags alight 210  
Above the baffled tempest: tree and tree  
Stir themselves from the stupor of the night,  
And every strangled branch resumes its right  
To breathe, shakes loose dark's clinging dregs,  
waves free

In dripping glory. Prone the runnels plunge, 215  
While earth, distent with moisture like a sponge,  
Smokes up, and leaves each plant its gem to see,  
Each grass-blade's glory-glitter. Had I known  
The torrent now turned river?—masterful  
Making its rush o'er tumbled ravage—stone 220  
And stub which barred the froths and foams: no  
bull

Ever broke bounds in formidable sport  
More overwhelmingly, till lo, the spasm  
Sets him to dare that last mad leap: report  
Who may—his fortunes in the deathly chasm 225  
That swallows him in silence! Rather turn  
Whither, upon the upland, pedestalled  
Into the broad day-splendour, whom discern  
These eyes but thee, supreme one, rightly called  
Moon-maid in heaven above and, here below, 230  
Earth's huntress-queen? I note the garb succinct  
Saving from smirch that purity of snow  
From breast to knee—snow's self with just the  
tinct

Of the apple-blossom's heart-blush. Ah, the bow  
Slack-strung her fingers grasp, where, ivory-linked 235  
Horn curving blends with horn, a moonlike pair  
Which mimic the brow's crescent sparkling so—  
As if a star's live restless fragment winked  
Proud yet repugnant, captive in such hair!  
What hope along the hillside, what far bliss 240

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Lets the crisp hair-plaits fall so low they kiss  
Those lucid shoulders? Must a morn so blithe,  
Needs have its sorrow when the twang and hiss  
Tell that from out thy sheaf one shaft makes  
writhe

Its victim, thou unerring Artemis? 245

Why did the chamois stand so fair a mark  
Arrested by the novel shape he dreamed  
Was bred of liquid marble in the dark  
Depths of the mountain's womb which ever teemed  
With novel births of wonder? Not one spark 250  
Of pity in that steel-grey glance which gleamed  
At the poor hoof's protesting as it stamped  
Idly the granite? Let me glide unseen  
From thy proud presence: well mayst thou be  
queen

Of all those strange and sudden deaths which  
damped 255

So oft Love's torch and Hymen's taper lit  
For happy marriage till the maidens paled  
And perished on the temple-step, assailed  
By—what except to envy must man's wit  
Impute that sure implacable release 260  
Of life from warmth and joy? But death means  
peace.

### x

Noon is the conqueror,—not a spray, nor leaf,  
Nor herb, nor blossom but has rendered up  
Its morning dew: the valley seemed one cup  
Of cloud-smoke, but the vapour's reign was brief, 265  
Sun-smitten, see, it hangs—the filmy haze—  
Grey-garmenting the herbless mountain-side,  
To soothe the day's sharp glare: while far and  
wide

Above unclouded burns the sky, one blaze

## GERARD DE LAIRESSE

With fierce immitigable blue, no bird 270  
Ventures to spot by passage. E'en of peaks  
Which still presume there, plain each pale point  
speaks

In wan transparency of waste incurred  
By over-daring : far from me be such !  
Deep in the hollow, rather, where combine 275  
Tree, shrub and briar to roof with shade and cool  
The remnant of some lily-strangled pool,  
Edged round with mossy fringing soft and fine.

Smooth lie the bottom slabs, and overhead  
Watch elder, bramble, rose, and service-tree 280  
And one beneficent rich barberry  
Jewelled all over with fruit-pendants red.

What have I seen ! O Satyr, well I know  
How sad thy case, and what a world of woe  
Was hid by the brown visage furry-framed 285  
Only for mirth : who otherwise could think—

Marking thy mouth gape still on laughter's brink,  
Thine eyes a-swim with merriment unnamed  
But haply guessed at by their furtive wink ?  
And all the while a heart was panting sick 290

Behind that shaggy bulwark of thy breast—  
Passion it was that made those breath-bursts  
thick

I took for mirth subsiding into rest.  
So, it was Lyda—she of all the train  
Of forest-thridding nymphs,—'t was only she 295  
Turned from thy rustic homage in disdain,

Saw but that poor uncouth outside of thee,  
And, from her circling sisters, mocked a pain  
Echo had pitied—whom Pan loved in vain—  
For she was wishful to partake thy glee, 300

Mimic thy mirth—who loved her not again,  
Savage for Lyda's sake. She crouches there—  
Thy cruel beauty, slumberously laid

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Supine on heaped-up beast-skins, unaware  
Thy steps have traced her to the briery glade, 305  
Thy greedy hands disclose the cradling lair,  
Thy hot eyes reach and revel on the maid !

### XI

Now, what should this be for? The sun's decline

Seems as he lingered lest he lose some act  
Dread and decisive, some prodigious fact 310  
Like thunder from the safe sky's sapphirine  
About to alter earth's conditions, packed  
With fate for nature's self that waits, aware  
What mischief unsuspected in the air  
Menaces momentarily a cataract. 315

Therefore it is that yonder space extends  
Untrenched upon by any vagrant tree,  
Shrub, weed well nigh ; they keep their bounds,  
leave free

The platform for what actors? Foes or friends,  
Here come they trooping silent : heaven suspends 320

Purpose the while they range themselves. I see !  
Bent on a battle, two vast powers agree  
This present and no after-contest ends  
One or the other's grasp at rule in reach  
Over the race of man—host fronting host, 325  
As statue statue fronts—wrath-molten each,  
Solidified by hate,—earth halved almost,  
To close once more in chaos. Yet two shapes  
Show prominent, each from the universe  
Of minions round about him, that disperse 330  
Like cloud-obstruction when a bolt escapes.  
Who flames first? Macedonian, is it thou?  
Ay, and who fronts thee, King Darius, drapes  
His form with purple, fillet-folds his brow.

## GERARD DE LAIRESSE

### XII

What, then the long day dies at last ? Abrupt 335  
The sun that seemed, in stooping, sure to melt  
Our mountain ridge, is mastered : black the belt  
Of westward crags, his gold could not corrupt,  
Barriers again the valley, lets the flow  
Of lavish glory waste itself away 340  
—Whither ? For new climes, fresh eyes breaks  
the day !  
Night was not to be baffled. If the glow  
Were all that 's gone from us ! Did clouds, afloat  
So filmily but now, discard no rose,  
Sombre throughout the fleeciness that grows 345  
A sullen uniformity. I note  
Rather displeasure,—in the overspread  
Change from the swim of gold to one pale lead  
Oppressive to malevolence,—than late  
Those amorous yearnings when the aggregate 350  
Of cloudlets pressed that each and all might sate  
Its passion and partake in relics red  
Of day's bequeathment : now, a frown instead  
Estranges, and affrights who needs must fare  
On and on till his journey ends : but where ? 355  
Caucasus ? Lost now in the night. Away  
And far enough lies that Arcadia.  
The human heroes tread the world's dark way  
No longer. Yet I dimly see almost—  
Yes, for my last adventure ! 'T is a ghost. 360  
So drops away the beauty ! There he stands  
Voiceless, scarce strives with deprecating hands.

### XIII

Enough ! Stop further fooling, De Lairese !  
My fault, not yours ! Some fitter way express  
Heart's satisfaction that the Past indeed 365  
Is past, gives way before Life's best and last,

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

The all-including Future ! What were life  
Did soul stand still therein, forego her strife  
Through the ambiguous Present to the goal  
Of some all-reconciling Future ? Soul, 370  
Nothing has been which shall not bettered be  
Hereafter,—leave the root, by law's decree  
Whence springs the ultimate and perfect tree !  
Busy thee with unearthing root ? Nay, climb—  
Quit trunk, branch, leaf and flower—reach, rest  
sublime 375

Where fruitage ripens in the blaze of day !  
O'erlook, despise, forget, throw flower away,  
Intent on progress ? No whit more than stop  
Ascent therewith to dally, screen the top  
Sufficiency of yield by interposed 380  
Twistwork bold foot gets free from. Wherefore  
glozed

The poets—" Dream afresh old godlike shapes,  
Recapture ancient fable that escapes,  
Push back reality, repeople earth  
With vanished falseness, recognize no worth 385  
In fact new-born unless 't is rendered back  
Pallid by fancy, as the western rack  
Of fading cloud bequeaths the lake some gleam  
Of its gone glory ! "

### XIV

Let things be—not seem,  
I counsel rather,—do, and nowise dream ! 390  
Earth's young significance is all to learn :  
The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn  
Where who seeks fire finds ashes. Ghost, for-  
sooth !  
What was the best Greece babbled of as truth ?  
" A shade, a wretched nothing,—sad, thin, drear, 395  
Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,



## GERARD DE LAIRESSE

If hand have haply sprinkled o'er the dead  
Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth red  
One moment by the sip of sacrifice :  
Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice 400  
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length  
The last faint flutter craving—not for strength,  
Not beauty, not the riches and the rule  
O'er men that made life life indeed." Sad school  
Was Hades ! Gladly,—might the dead but slink 405  
To life back,—to the dregs once more would drink  
Each interloper, drain the humblest cup  
Fate mixes for humanity.

### XV

Cheer up,—  
Be death with me, as with Achilles erst,  
Of Man's calamities the last and worst : 410  
Take it so ! By proved potency that still  
Makes perfect, be assured, come what come will,  
What once lives never dies—what here attains  
To a beginning, has no end, still gains  
And never loses aught : when, where, and how— 415  
Lies in Law's lap. What's death then ? Even now  
With so much knowledge is it hard to bear  
Brief interposing ignorance ? Is care  
For a creation found at fault just there—  
There where the heart breaks bond and outruns  
time, 420  
To reach, not follow what shall be ?

### XVI

Here's rhyme  
Such as one makes now,—say, when Spring repeats  
That miracle the Greek Bard sadly greets :  
"Spring for the tree and herb—no Spring for us!"  
Let Spring come : why, a man salutes her thus : 425

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Dance, yellows and whites and reds,—  
Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, heads  
Astir with the wind in the tulip-beds !

There 's sunshine ; scarcely a wind at all  
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small  
On a certain mound by a churchyard wall.

430

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows  
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellows :  
Dance you, reds and whites and yellows !

## WITH CHARLES AVISON

### I

How strange !—but, first of all, the little fact  
Which led my fancy forth. This bitter morn  
Showed me no object in the stretch forlorn  
Of garden-ground beneath my window, backed  
By yon worn wall wherefrom the creeper, tacked 5  
To clothe its brickwork, hangs now, rent and racked  
By five months' cruel winter,—showed no torn  
And tattered ravage worse for eyes to see  
Than just one ugly space of clearance, left  
Bare even of the bones which used to be 10  
Warm wrappage, safe embracement : this one  
cleft—

—O what a life and beauty filled it up  
Startlingly, when methought the rude clay cup  
Ran over with poured bright wine ! 'T was a bird  
Breast-deep there, tugging at his prize, deterred 15  
No whit by the fast-falling snow-flake : gain  
Such prize my blackcap must by might and main—  
The cloth-shred, still a-flutter from its nail  
That fixed a spray once. Now, what told the tale  
To thee,—no townsman but born orchard-thief,— 20  
That here—surpassing moss-tuft, beard from sheaf  
Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long and stout,  
All proper country-pillage—here, no doubt,  
Was just the scrap to steal should line thy nest  
Superbly ? Off he flew, his bill possessed 25  
The booty sure to set his wife's each wing  
Greenly a-quiver. How they climb and cling,

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Hang parrot-wise to bough, these blackcaps !

Strange

Seemed to a city-dweller that the finch  
Should stray so far to forage : at a pinch, 30  
Was not the fine wool's self within his range  
—Filchings on every fence? But no : the need  
Was of this rag of manufacture, spoiled  
By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled,  
New-suited to what scheming finch would breed 35  
In comfort, this uncomfortable March.

### II

Yet—by the first pink blossom on the larch !—  
This was scarce stranger than that memory,—  
In want of what should cheer the stay-at-home,  
My soul,—must straight clap pinion, well nigh  
roam 40

A century back, nor once close plume, descry  
The appropriate rag to plunder, till she pounced—  
Pray, on what relic of a brain long still?  
What old-world work proved forage for the bill  
Of memory the far-flyer? “March” announced, 45  
I verily believe, the dead and gone  
Name of a music-maker : one of such  
In England as did little or did much,  
But, doing, had their day once. Avison !  
Singly and solely for an air of thine, 50  
Bold-stepping “March,” foot stept to ere my  
hand

Could stretch an octave, I o'erlooked the band  
Of majesties familiar, to decline  
On thee—not too conspicuous on the list  
Of worthies who by help of pipe or wire 55  
Expressed in sound rough rage or soft desire—  
Thou, whilom of Newcastle organist !

## CHARLES AVISON

### III

So much could one—well, thinnish air effect.  
Am I ungrateful? for, your March, styled “Grand,”  
Did veritably seem to grow, expand, 60  
And greaten up to title as, unchecked,  
Dream-marchers marched, kept marching, slow  
and sure,  
In time, to tune, unchangeably the same,  
From nowhere into nowhere,—out they came,  
Onward they passed, and in they went. No lure 65  
Of novel modulation pricked the flat  
Forthright persisting melody,—no hint  
That discord, sound asleep beneath the flint,  
—Struck—might spring spark-like, claim due tit-  
for-tat,  
Quenched in a concord. No! Yet, such the 70  
might  
Of quietude’s immutability,  
That somehow coldness gathered warmth, well nigh  
Quickened—which could not be!—grew burning-  
bright  
With fife-shriek, cymbal-clash and trumpet-blare,  
To drum-accentuation : pacing turned 75  
Striding, and striding grew gigantic, spurned  
At last the narrow space ’twixt earth and air,  
So shook me back into my sober self.

### IV

And where woke I? The March had set me down  
There whence I plucked the measure, as his brown 80  
Frayed flannel-bit my blackcap. Great John Relfe,  
Master of mine, learned, redoubtable,  
It little needed thy consummate skill  
To fitly figure such a bass! The key  
Was—should not memory play me false—well, C. 85

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Ay, with the Greater Third, in Triple Time,  
Three crotchets to a bar : no change, I grant,  
Except from Tonic down to Dominant.  
And yet—and yet—if I could put in rhyme  
Themanner of that marching!—which had stopped 90  
—I wonder, where?—but that my weak self dropped  
From out the ranks, to rub eyes disentranced  
And feel that, after all the way advanced,  
Back must I foot it, I and my compeers,  
Only to reach, across a hundred years, 95  
The bandsman Avison whose little book  
And large tune thus had led me the long way  
(As late a rag my blackcap) from to-day  
And to-day's music-manufacture,—Brahms,  
Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt,—to where—trumpets,  
shawms, 100  
Show yourselves joyful!—Handel reigns—su-  
preme?  
By no means! Buononcini's work is theme  
For fit laudation of the impartial few :  
(We stand in England, mind you!) Fashion too  
Favours Geminiani—of those choice 105  
Concertos : nor there wants a certain voice  
Raised in thy favour likewise, famed Pepusch  
Dear to our great-grandfathers! In a bush  
Of Doctor's wig, they prized thee timing beats  
While Greenwaytrilled "Alexis." Such were feats 110  
Of music in thy day—dispute who list—  
Avison, of Newcastle organist!

### V

And here's your music all alive once more—  
As once it was alive, at least : just so  
The figured worthies of a waxwork-show 115  
Attest—such people, years and years ago,  
Looked thus when outside death had life below,

## CHARLES AVISON

—Could say “We are now,” not “We were of yore,”

—“Feel how our pulses leap!” and not “Explore—  
Explain why quietude has settled o’er  
Surface once all-awork!” Ay, such a “Suite” 120  
Roused heart to rapture, such a “Fugue” would  
catch

Soul heavenwards up, when time was : why attach  
Blame to exhausted faultlessness, no match  
For fresh achievement? Feat once—ever feat ! 125  
How can completion grow still more complete?  
Hear Avison ! He tenders evidence

That music in his day as much absorbed  
Heart and soul then as Wagner’s music now.  
Perfect from centre to circumference— 130

Orbed to the full can be but fully orbéd :  
And yet—and yet—whence comes it that “O  
Thou”—

Sighed by the soul at eve to Hesperus—  
Will not again take wing and fly away  
(Since fatal Wagner fixed it fast for us) 135  
In some unmodulated minor? Nay,  
Even by Handel’s help !

### VI

I state it thus :

There is no truer truth obtainable  
By Man than comes of music. “Soul”—(accept  
A word which vaguely names what no adept 140  
In word-use fits and fixes so that still  
Thing shall not slip word’s fetter and remain  
Innominate as first, yet, free again,  
Is no less recognized the absolute  
Fact underlying that same other fact 145  
Concerning which no cavil can dispute  
Our nomenclature when we call it “Mind”—

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Something not Matter)—“Soul,” who seeks shall  
find

Distinct beneath that something. You exact  
An illustrative image? This may suit.

150

### VII

We see a work : the worker works behind,  
Invisible himself. Suppose his act  
Be to o'erarch a gulf : he digs, transports,  
Shapes and, through enginery—all sizes, sorts,  
Lays stone by stone until a floor compact 155  
Proves our bridged causeway. So works Mind  
—by stress

Of faculty, with loose facts, more or less,  
Builds up our solid knowledge : all the same,  
Underneath rolls what Mind may hide not tame,  
An element which works beyond our guess, 160  
Soul, the unsounded sea—whose lift of surge,  
Spite of all superstructure, lets emerge,  
In flower and foam, Feeling from out the deeps  
Mind arrogates no mastery upon—

Distinct indisputably. Has there gone 165  
To dig up, drag forth, render smooth from rough  
Mind's flooring,—operosity enough?

Still the successive labour of each inch,  
Who lists may learn : from the last turn of winch  
That let the polished slab-stone find its place, 170  
To the first prod of pick-axe at the base  
Of the unquarried mountain,—what was all

Mind's varied process except natural,  
Nay, easy, even, to descry, describe,  
After our fashion? “So worked Mind : its tribe 175  
Of senses ministrant above, below,  
Far, near, or now or haply long ago  
Brought to pass knowledge.” But Soul's sea,—  
drawn whence,



## CHARLES AVISON

Fed how, forced whither,—by what evidence  
Of ebb and flow, that 's felt beneath the tread, 180  
Soul has its course 'neath Mind's work overhead,—  
Who tells of, tracks to source the founts of Soul?  
Yet wherefore heaving sway and restless roll  
This side and that, except to emulate  
Stability above? To match and mate 185  
Feeling with knowledge,—make as manifest  
Soul's work as Mind's work, turbulence as rest,  
Hates, loves, joys, woes, hopes, fears, that rise  
and sink  
Ceaselessly, passion's transient flit and wink,  
A ripple's tinting or a spume-sheet's spread 190  
Whitening the wave,—to strike all this life dead,  
Run mercury into a mould like lead,  
And henceforth have the plain result to show—  
How we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know—  
This were the prize and is the puzzle!—which 195  
Music essays to solve: and here 's the hitch  
That baulks her of full triumph else to boast.

### VIII

All Arts endeavour this, and she the most  
Attains thereto, yet fails of touching: why?  
Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's ministry? 200  
What's known once is known ever: Arts arrange,  
Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange  
Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or deep  
Construct their bravest,—still such pains produce  
Change, not creation: simply what lay loose 205  
At first lies firmly after, what design  
Was faintly traced in hesitating line  
Once on a time, grows firmly resolute  
Henceforth and evermore. Now, could we shoot  
Liquidity into a mould,—some way 210

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

Arrest Soul's evanescent moods, and keep  
Unalterably still the forms that leap  
To life for once by help of Art!—which yearns  
To save its capture: Poetry discerns,  
Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and fall, 215  
Bursting, subsidence, intermixture—all  
A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art a-strain  
Would stay the apparition,—nor in vain:  
The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and swift  
Colour-and-line-throw—proud the prize they lift! 220  
Thus felt Man and thus looked Man,—passions  
caught

I' the midway swim of sea,—not much, if aught,  
Of nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and fears,  
Enwombed past Art's disclosure. Fleet the  
years,

And still the Poet's page holds Helena 225  
At gaze from topmost Troy—"But where are  
they,

My brothers, in the armament I name  
Hero by hero? Can it be that shame  
For their lost sister holds them from the war?"  
—Knowing not they already slept afar 230  
Each of them in his own dear native land.

Still on the Painter's fresco, from the hand  
Of God takes Eve the life-spark whereunto  
She trembles up from nothingness. Outdo  
Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper yet, 235  
Drag into day,—by sound, thy master-net,—  
The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing  
Unbroken of a branch, palpitating  
With limbs' play and life's semblance! There it  
lies,

Marvel and mystery, of mysteries 240  
And marvels, most to love and laud thee for!  
Save it from chance and change we most abhor!

## CHARLES AVISON

Give momentary feeling permanence,  
So that thy capture hold, a century hence,  
Truth's very heart of truth as, safe to-day, 245  
The Painter's Eve, the Poet's Helena,  
Still rapturously bend, afar still throw  
The wistful gaze ! Thanks, Homer, Angelo !  
Could Music rescue thus from Soul's profound,  
Give feeling immortality by sound, 250  
Then were she queenliest of Arts ! Alas—  
As well expect the rainbow not to pass !  
“Praise ‘Radaminta’—love attains therein  
To perfect utterance ! Pity—what shall win  
Thy secret like ‘Rinaldo’ ?”—so men said : 255  
Once all was perfume—now, the flower is dead—  
They spied tints, sparks have left the spar ! Love,  
hate,  
Joy, fear, survive,—alike importunate  
As ever to go walk the world again,  
Nor ghost-like pant for outlet all in vain 260  
Till Music loose them, fit each filmily  
With form enough to know and name it by  
For any recognizer sure of ken  
And sharp of ear, no grosser denizen  
Of earth than needs be. Nor to such appeal 265  
Is Music long obdurate : off they steal—  
How gently, dawn-doomed phantoms ! back come  
they  
Full-blooded with new crimson of broad day—  
Passion made palpable once more. Ye look  
Your last on Handel ? Gaze your first on Gluck ! 270  
Why wistful search, O waning ones, the chart  
Of stars for you while Haydn, while Mozart  
Occupies heaven ? These also, fanned to fire,  
Flamboyant wholly,—so perfections tire,—  
Whiten to wanness, till . . . let others note 275  
The ever-new invasion !

# PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

## IX

I devote  
Rather my modicum of parts to use  
What power may yet avail to re-infuse  
(In fancy, please you !) sleep that looks like death  
With momentary liveliness, lend breath 280  
To make the torpor half inhale. O Relfe,  
An all-unworthy pupil, from the shelf  
Of thy laboratory, dares unstop  
Bottle, ope box, extract thence pinch and drop  
Of dusts and dewes a many thou didst shrine 285  
Each in its right receptacle, assign  
To each its proper office, letter large  
Label and label, then with solemn charge,  
Reviewing learnedly the list complete  
Of chemical ~~reactives~~, from thy feet 290  
Push down the same to me, attent below,  
Power in abundance : armed wherewith I go  
To play the enlivener. Bring good antique stuff !  
Was it alight once ? Still lives spark enough  
For breath to quicken, run the smouldering ash 295  
Red right-through. What, "stone-dead" were  
fools so rash  
As style my Avison, because he lacked  
Modern appliance, spread out phrase unracked  
By modulations fit to make each hair  
Stiffen upon his wig ? See there—and there ! 300  
I sprinkle my reactives, pitch broadcast  
Discords and resolutions, turn aghast  
Melody's easy-going, jostle law  
With licence, modulate (no Bach in awe),  
Change enharmonically (Hudl to thank), 305  
And lo, upstart the flamelets,—what was blank  
Turns scarlet, purple, crimson ! Straightway  
scanned

## CHARLES AVISON

By eyes that like new lustre—Love once more  
Years through the Largo, Hatred as before  
Rages in the Rubato : e'en thy March, 310  
My Avison, which, sooth to say—(ne'er arch  
Eyebrows in anger !)—timed in Georgian years  
The step precise of British Grenadiers  
To such a nicety,—if score I crowd,  
If rhythm I break, if beats I vary,—tap 315  
At bar's off-starting turns true thunder-clap,  
Ever the pace augmented till—what 's here ?  
Titanic striding towards Olympus !

### X

#### Fear

No such irreverent innovation ! Still  
Glide on, go rolling, water-like, at will— 320  
Nay, were thy melody in monotone,  
The due three-parts dispensed with !

### XI

#### This alone

Comes of my tiresome talking : Music's throne  
Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,  
And whom in turn—by who knows what new feats 325  
Of strength,—shall somebody as sure push down,  
Consign him dispossessed of sceptre, crown,  
And orb imperial—whereto ?—Never dream  
That what once lived shall ever die ! They seem  
Dead—do they ? lapsed things lost in limbo ?  
Bring 330  
Our life to kindle theirs, and straight each king  
Starts, you shall see, stands up, from head to  
foot  
No inch that is not Purcell ! Wherefore ? (Suit  
Measure to subject, first—no marching on  
Yet in thy bold C major, Avison, 335

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

As suited step a minute since : no : wait—  
Into the minor key first modulate—  
Gently with A, now—in the Lesser Third !)

### XII

Of all the lamentable debts incurred  
By Man through buying knowledge, this were  
worst :

340

That he should find his last gain prove his first  
Was futile—merely nescience absolute,  
Not knowledge in the bud which holds a fruit  
Haply undreamed of in the soul's Spring-tide,  
Pursued in the petals Summer opens wide,  
And Autumn, withering, rounds to perfect ripe,—  
Not this,—but ignorance, a blur to wipe  
From human records, late it graced so much.

345

“Truth—this attainment? Ah, but such and such  
Beliefs of yore seemed inexpugnable

350

When we attained them ! E'en as they, so will  
This their successor have the due morn, noon,  
Evening and night—just as an old-world tune  
Wears out and drops away, until who hears  
Smilingly questions—‘This it was brought tears  
Once to all eyes,—this roused heart's rapture  
once ?’

355

So will it be with truth that, for the nonce,  
Styles itself truth perennial : 'ware its wile !  
Knowledge turns nescience,—foremost on the file,  
Simply proves first of our delusions.”

### XIII

Now—  
Blare it forth, bold C Major ! Lift thy brow,  
Man, the immortal, that wast never fooled  
With gifts no gifts at all, nor ridiculed—  
Man knowing—he who nothing knew ! As Hope,

360

## CHARLES AVISON

Fear, Joy, and Grief,—though ampler stretch and  
scope 365  
They seek and find in novel rhythm, fresh phrase,—  
Were equally existent in far days  
Of Music's dim beginning—even so,  
Truth was at full within thee long ago,  
Alive as now it takes what latest shape 370  
May startle thee by strangeness. Truths escape  
Time's insufficient garniture : they fade,  
They fall—those sheathings now grown sere, whose  
aid  
Was infinite to truth they wrapped, saved fine  
And free through March frost : May dews cry-  
stalline 375  
Nourish truth merely,—does June boast the fruit  
As—not new vesture merely but, to boot,  
Novel creation ? Soon shall fade and fall  
Myth after myth—the husk-like lies I call  
New truth's corolla-safeguard : Autumn comes, 380  
So much the better !

### XIV

Therefore—bang the drums,  
Blow the trumps, Avison ! March - motive ?  
that 's  
Truth which endures resetting. Sharps and flats,  
Lavish at need, shall dance athwart thy score  
When ophicleide and bombardon's uproar 385  
Mate the approaching trample, even now  
Big in the distance—or my ears deceive—  
Of federated England, fitly weave  
March-music for the Future !

### XV

Or suppose  
Back, and not forward, transformation goes ? 390  
Once more some sable-stoled procession—say,

## PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

From Little-ease to Tyburn—wends its way,  
Out of the dungeon to the gallows-tree  
Where heading, hacking, hanging is to be  
Of half-a-dozen recusants—this day 395  
Three hundred years ago ! How duly drones  
Elizabethan plain-song—dim antique  
Grown clarion-clear the while I humbly wreak  
A classic vengeance on thy March ! It moans—  
Larges and Longs and Breves displacing quite 400  
Crotchet-and-quaver pertness—brushing bars  
Aside and filling vacant sky with stars  
Hidden till now that day returns to night.

### XVI

Nor night nor day : one purpose move us both,  
Be thy mood mine ! As thou wast minded, Man's 405  
The cause our music champions : I were loth  
To think we cheered our troop to Preston Pans  
Ignobly : back to times of England's best !  
Parliament stands for privilege—life and limb  
Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden, Pym, 410  
The famous Five. There 's rumour of arrest.  
Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark ! They  
protest :  
Shall we not all join chorus ? Hark the hymn,  
—Rough, rude, robustious—homely heart a-throb,  
Harsh voice a-hallo, as beseems the mob ! 415  
How good is noise ! what 's silence but despair  
Of making sound match gladness never there ?  
Give me some great glad "subject," glorious Bach,  
Where cannon-roar not organ-peal we lack !  
Join in, give voice robustious rude and rough,— 420  
Avison helps—so heart lend noise enough !

Fife, trumpet, drum, sound ! and singers then,  
Marching, say "Pym, the man of men !"



## CHARLES AVISON

Up, heads, your proudest—out, throats, your  
loudest—

“Somerset’s Pym !”

425

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,  
Foes, friends, shout “Pym, our citizen !”  
Wail, the foes he quelled,—hail, the friends he  
held,

“Tavistock’s Pym !”

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the pen  
Teach babes unborn the where and when  
—Tyrants, he braved them,—patriots, he saved  
them—

430

“Westminster’s Pym !”

*Lustily.*



# PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE



# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

## AN EPILOGUE

*Inside the House of Fust, Mayence, 1457*

### FIRST FRIEND

UP, up, up—next step of the staircase  
Lands us, lo, at the chamber of dread !

### SECOND FRIEND

Locked and barred ?

### THIRD FRIEND

Door open—the rare case !

### FOURTH FRIEND

Ay, there he leans—lost wretch !

### FIFTH FRIEND

His head  
Sunk on his desk 'twixt his arms outspread ! 5

### SIXTH FRIEND

Hallo,—wake, man, ere God thunderstrike May-  
ence  
—Mulct for thy sake who art Satan's, John Fust !  
Satan installed here, God's rule in abeyance,  
Mayence some morning may crumble to dust.  
Answer our questions thou shalt and thou must ! 10

# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

## SEVENTH FRIEND

Softly and fairly ! Wherefore a-gloom ?  
Greet us, thy gossipry, cousin and sib !  
Raise the forlorn brow, Fust ! Make room—  
Let daylight through arms which, enfolding  
thee, crib  
From those clenched lids the comfort of sunshine !

## FIRST FRIEND

So glib 15

Thy tongue slides to “comfort” already ? Not  
mine !

Behovesus deal roundly : the wretch is distraught  
—Too well I guess wherefore ! Behoves a Divine  
—Such as I, by grace, boast me—to threaten  
one caught

In the enemy’s toils,—setting “comfort” at nought. 20

## SECOND FRIEND

Nay, Brother, so hasty ? I heard—nor long since—  
Of a certain Black Artsman who,—helplessly  
bound

By rash pact with Satan,—through paying—why  
mince

The matter ?—fit price to the Church,—safe and  
sound

Full a year after death in his grave-clothes was  
found. 25

Whereas ’t is notorious the Fiend claims his due  
During lifetime,—comes clawing, with talons  
afame,

The soul from the flesh-rags left smoking and blue :  
So it happed with John Faust ; lest John Fust  
fare the same,—

Look up, I adjure thee by God’s holy name ! 30

## AN EPILOGUE

For neighbours and friends—no foul hell-brood  
flock we !

Saith Solomon “Words of the wise are as goads :”  
Ours prick but to startle from torpor, set free  
Soul and sense from death’s drowse.

### FIRST FRIEND

And soul, wakened, unloads  
Much sin by confession : no mere palinodes ! 35

—“I was youthful and wanton, am old yet no sage :  
When angry I cursed, struck and slew : did I  
want ?

Right and left did I rob : though no war I dared  
wage

With the Church (God forbid !)—harm her least  
ministrant—

Still I outraged all else. Now that strength is  
grown scant, 40

I am probity’s self”—no such bleatings as these !

But avowal of guilt so enormous, it baulks  
Tongue’s telling. Yet penitence prompt may  
appease

God’s swrath at thy bond with the Devil who stalks  
—Strides hither to strangle thee !

### FUST

Childhood so talks. 45

Not rare wit nor ripe age—ye boast them, my  
neighbours !—

Should lay such a charge on your townsman,  
this Fust

Who, known for a life spent in pleasures and  
labours

If freakish yet venial, could scarce be induced  
To traffic with fiends.

## FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

FIRST FRIEND

So, my words have unloosed 50  
A plie from those pale lips corrugate but now ?

FUST

Lost count me, yet not as ye lean to surmise.

FIRST FRIEND

To surmise ? to establish ! Unbury that brow !  
Look up, that thy judge may read clear in thine  
eyes !

SECOND FRIEND

By your leave, Brother Barnabite ! Mine to  
advise ! 55

—Who arraign thee, John Fust ! What was  
bruited erewhile  
Now bellows through Mayence. All cry—thou  
hast trucked  
Salvation away for lust's solace ! Thy smile  
Takes its hue from hell's smoulder !

FUST

Too certain ! I sucked  
—Got drunk at the nipple of sense.

SECOND FRIEND

Thou hast ducked— 60  
Art drowned there, say rather ! Faugh—fleshly  
disport !  
How else but by help of Sir Belial didst win  
That Venus-like lady, no drudge of thy sort  
Could lure to become his accomplice in sin ?  
Folk nicknamed her Helen of Troy !

## AN EPILOGUE

FIRST FRIEND

Best begin 65

At the very beginning. Thy father,—all knew,  
A mere goldsmith . . .

FUST

Who knew him, per-  
chance may know this—  
He dying left much gold and jewels no few :  
Whom these help to court with but seldom  
shall miss  
The love of a leman : true witchcraft, I wis ! 70

FIRST FRIEND

Dost flout me? 'T is said, in debauchery's guild  
Admitted prime guttler and guzzler—O swine!—  
To honour thy headship, those tosspots so swilled  
That out of their table there sprouted a vine  
Whence each claimed a cluster, awaiting thy sign 75  
To out knife, off mouthful : when—who could  
suppose  
Such malice in magic?—each sot woke and  
found  
Cold steel but an inch from the neighbour's red  
nose  
He took for a grape-bunch !

FUST

Does that so astound  
Sagacity such as ye boast,—who surround 80

Your mate with eyes staring, hairs standing erect  
At his magical feats? Are good burghers  
unversed

## FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

In the humours of toping? Full oft, I suspect,  
Ye, counting your fingers, call thumbkin their  
first,  
And reckon a groat every guilder disbursed. 85

What marvel if wags, while the skinker fast  
brimmed

Their glass with rare tipples' enticement, should  
gloat  
—Befooled and befastered—through optics drink-  
dimmed—

On this draught and that, till each found in his  
throat  
Our Rhenish smack rightly as Raphal? For, note— 90

They fancied—their fuddling deceived them so  
grossly—

That liquor sprang out of the table itself  
Through gimlet-holes drilled there,—nor noticed  
how closely

The skinker kept plying my guests, from the  
shelf  
O'er their heads, with the potable madness. No elf 95

Had need to persuade them a vine rose um-  
brageous,

Fruit-bearing, thirst-quenching! Enough! I  
confess

To many such fool-pranks, but none so outrageous

That Satan was called in to help me : excess  
I own to, I grieve at—no more and no less. 100

### SECOND FRIEND

Strange honours were heaped on thee—medal for  
breast,

Chain for neck, sword for thigh : not a lord of  
the land



## AN EPILOGUE

But acknowledged thee peer ! What ambition  
    possessed  
    A goldsmith by trade, with craft's grime on his  
    hand,  
To seek such associates ?

FUST

Spare taunts ! Understand— 105

I submit me ! Of vanities under the sun,  
    Pride seized me at last as concupiscence first,  
Crapulosity ever : true Fiends, everyone,  
    Haled this way and that my poor soul : thus  
    amerced—  
Forgive and forget me !

FIRST FRIEND

    Had flesh sinned the worst, 110  
Yet help were in counsel : the Church could  
    absolve :  
    But say not men truly thou barredst escape  
By signing and sealing . . .

SECOND FRIEND

    On me must devolve  
The task of extracting . . .

FIRST FRIEND

    Shall Barnabites ape  
Us Dominican experts ?

SEVENTH FRIEND

    Nay, Masters,—agape 115  
When Hell yawns for a soul, 't is myself claim  
    the task  
Of extracting, by just one plain question,  
    God's truth !

## FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

Where 's Peter Genesheim thy partner? I ask  
Why, cloistered up still in thy room, the pale  
youth  
Slaves tongue-tied—thy trade brooks no tattling  
forsooth !

120

No less he, thy *famulus*, suffers entrapping,  
Succumbs to good fellowship : barrel a-broach  
Runs freely nor needs any subsequent tapping :  
Quoth Peter "That room, none but I dare  
approach,  
Holds secrets will help me to ride in my coach." 125

He prattles, we profit : in brief, he assures  
Thou hast taught him to speak so that all men  
may hear  
—Each alike, wide world over, Jews, Pagans,  
Turks, Moors,  
The same as we Christians—speech heard far  
and near  
At one and the same magic moment !

FUST

That 's clear ! 130

Said he—how ?

### SEVENTH FRIEND

Is it like he was licensed to learn ?  
Whodoubts butthoudostthisbyaidoftheFiend?  
Is it so ? So it is, for thou smilest ! Go, burn  
To ashes, since such proves thy portion, un-  
screened  
By bell, book and candle ! Yet lately I weened 135  
Balm yet was in Gilead,—some healing in store  
For the friend of my bosom. Men said thou  
wast sunk

## AN EPILOGUE

In a sudden despondency : not, as before,  
Fust gallant and gay with his pottle and punk,  
But sober, sad, sick as one yesterday drunk ! 140

### FUST

Spare Fust, then, thus contrite !—who, youthful  
and healthy,  
Equipped for life's struggle with culture of mind,  
Sound flesh and sane soul in coherence, born  
wealthy,  
Nay, wise—how he wasted endowment designed  
For the glory of God and the good of mankind ! 145  
That much were misused such occasions of grace  
Ye well may upbraid him, who bows to the rod.  
But this should bid anger to pity give place—  
He has turned from the wrong, in the right  
path to plod,  
Makes amends to mankind and craves pardon of  
God. 150

Yea, friends, even now from my lips the  
“ *Heureka*—  
Soul saved ! ” was nigh bursting—unduly elate !  
Have I brought Man advantage, or hatched—so  
to speak—a  
Strange serpent, no cygnet ? 'Tis this I debate  
Within me. Forbear, and leave Fust to his fate ! 155

### FIRST FRIEND

So abject, late lofty ? Methinks I spy respite.  
Make clean breast, discover what mysteries hide  
In thy room there !

### SECOND FRIEND

Ay, out with them ! Do Satan despite !  
Remember what caused his undoing was pride !

# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

## FIRST FRIEND

Dumb devil! Remains one resource to be tried! 160

## SECOND FRIEND

Exorcize!

## SEVENTH FRIEND

Nay, first—is there any remembers  
In substance that potent “*Ne pulvis*”—a psalm  
Whereof some live spark haply lurks mid the  
embers  
Which choke in my brain. Talk of “Gilead  
and balm”?  
I mind me, sung half through, this gave such a  
qualm 165

To Asmodeus inside of a Hussite, that, queasy,  
He broke forth in brimstone with curses. I’m  
strong  
In—at least the commencement: the rest should  
go easy,  
Friends helping. “*Ne pulvis et ignis*” . . .

## SIXTH FRIEND

All wrong!

## FIFTH FRIEND

I’ve conned till I captured the whole.

## SEVENTH FRIEND

Get along! 170

“*Ne pulvis et cinis superbe te geras,  
Nam fulmina*” . . .

## AN EPILOGUE

### SIXTH FRIEND

Fiddlestick! Peace, dolts and dorrs!  
Thus runs it "*Ne Numinis fulmina feras*"—

Then "*Hominis perfidi justa sunt sors*  
*Fulmen et grando et horrida mors.*"

175

### SEVENTH FRIEND

You blunder. "*Irati ne*" . . .

### SIXTH FRIEND

Mind your own business!

### FIFTH FRIEND

I do not so badly, who gained the monk's leave  
To study an hour his choice parchment. A dizziness

May well have surprised me. No Christian  
dares thief,  
Or I scarce had returned him his treasure. These  
cleave:

180

"*Nos pulvis et cinis, trementes, gementes,*  
*Venimus*"—some such word—"ad te, Domine.  
*Da lumen, juvamen, ut sancta sequentes*  
*Cor . . . corda . . .*" Plague take it!

### SEVENTH FRIEND

—"erecta sint spe:"

Right text, ringing rhyme, and ripe Latin for me!

185

### SIXTH FRIEND

A Canon's self wrote it me fair: I was tempted  
To part with the sheepskin.

# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

## SEVENTH FRIEND

Didst grasp and let go  
Such a godsend, thou Judas? My purse had  
been emptied  
Ere part with the prize !

## FUST

Do I dream? Say ye so?  
Clouds break, then! Move, world! I have gained  
my "*Pou sto*" !

190

I am saved : Archimedes, salute me !

## OMNES

Assistance !  
Help, Angels! He summons . . . Aroint  
thee !—by name,  
His familiar !

## FUST

Approach !

## OMNES

Devil, keep thy due distance !

## FUST

Be tranquillized, townsmen ! The knowledge  
ye claim  
Behold, I prepare to impart. Praise or blame,— 195  
Your blessing or banning, whatever betide me,  
At last I accept. The slow travail of years,  
The long-teeming brain's birth — applaud me,  
deride me,—  
At last claims revelation. Wait !

## AN EPILOGUE

SEVENTH FRIEND

Wait till appears  
Uncaged Archimedes cooped-up there ?

SECOND FRIEND

Who fears? 200

Here 's have at thee !

SEVENTH FRIEND

Correctly now ! “ *Pulvis et cinis* ” . . .

FUST

The verse ye so value, it happens I hold  
In my memory safe from *initium* to *finis*.  
Word for word, I produce you the whole, plain  
enrolled,  
Black letters, white paper—no scribe's red and  
gold ! 205

OMNES

Aroint thee !

FUST

I go and return. [*He enters the inner room.*]

FIRST FRIEND

Ay, 't is “ *ibis* ”  
No doubt : but as boldly “ *redibis* ”—who 'll say?  
I rather conjecture “ *in Orco peribis* ! ”

SEVENTH FRIEND

Come, neighbours !

SIXTH FRIEND

I 'm with you ! Show courage and stay  
Hell's outbreak ? Sirs, cowardice here wins the  
day ! 210

# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

## FIFTH FRIEND

What luck had that student of Bamberg who ventured

To peep in the cell where a wizard of note  
Was busy in getting some black deed debentured  
By Satan? In dog's guise there sprang at his  
throat

A flame-breathing fury. Fust favours, I note, 215  
An ugly huge lurcher!

## SEVENTH FRIEND

If I placed reliance  
As thou, on the beads thou art telling so fast,  
I 'd risk just a peep through the keyhole.

## SIXTH FRIEND

Appliance  
Of ear might be safer. Five minutes are past.

## OMNES

Saints, save us! The door is thrown open at last! 220

FUST (*re-enters, the door closing behind him*)

As I promised, behold I perform! Apprehend you  
The object I offer is poison or pest?

Receive without harm from the hand I extend you  
A gift that shall set every scruple at rest!

Shrink back from mere paper-strips? Try them  
and test! 225

Still hesitate? Myk, was it thou who lamentedst  
Thy five wits clean failed thee to render aright

A poem read once and no more?—who repentedst

Vile pelf had induced thee to banish from sight  
The characters none but our clerics indite? 230

Take and keep!



## AN EPILOGUE

### FIRST FRIEND

Blessed Mary and all Saints about her !

### SECOND FRIEND

What imps deal so deftly,—five minutes suffice  
To play thus the penman ?

### THIRD FRIEND

By Thomas the Doubter,  
Five minutes, no more !

### FOURTH FRIEND

Out on arts that entice  
Such scribes to do homage !

### FIFTH FRIEND

Stay ! Once—and now twice— 235

Yea, a third time, my sharp eye completes the  
inspection

Of line after line, the whole series, and finds  
Each letter join each—not a fault for detection !

Such upstrokes, such downstrokes, such strokes  
of all kinds  
In the criss-cross, all perfect !

### SIXTH FRIEND

There 's nobody minds 240

His quill-craft with more of a conscience, o'er-  
scratches

A sheepskin more nimbly and surely with ink,  
Than Paul the Sub-Prior : here 's paper that  
matches

His parchment with letter on letter, no link  
Overleapt—underlost !

# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

## SEVENTH FRIEND

No erasure, I think— 245

No blot, I am certain !

FUST

Accept the new treasure !

## SIXTH FRIEND

I remembered full half !

## SEVENTH FRIEND

But who other than I  
(Bear witness, bystanders !) when he broke the  
measure  
Repaired fault with “*fulmen*” ?

FUST

Put bickerings by !  
Here 's for thee—thee—and thee, too : at need a  
supply [distributing Proofs. 250

For Mayence, though seventy times seven should  
muster !

How now ? All so feeble of faith that no face  
Which fronts me but whitens—or yellows, were  
juster ?  
Speak out lest I summon my Spirits !

OMNES

Grace—grace !  
Call none of thy—helpmates ! We'll answer apace ! 255

My paper—and mine—and mine also—they vary  
In nowise—agree in each tittle and jot !  
Fust, how—why was this ?

## AN EPILOGUE

FUST

Shall such “*Cur*” miss a “*quare*” ?  
Within, there ! Throw doors wide ! Behold  
who complot  
To abolish the scribe’s work—blur, blunder and  
blot !

260

[*The doors open, and the Press is discovered in operation.*

Brave full-bodied birth of this brain that conceived thee

In splendour and music,—sustained the slow  
drag

Of the days stretched to years dim with doubt,—  
yet believed thee,

Had faith in thy first leap of life ! Pulse might  
flag—

—Mine fluttered how faintly !—Arch-moment  
might lag

265

Its longest—I bided, made light of endurance,

Held hard by the hope of an advent which—  
dreamed,

Is done now : night yields to the dawn’s re-  
assurance :

I have thee—I hold thee—my fancy that seemed,  
My fact that proves palpable ! Ay, Sirs, I schemed

270

Completion that ’s fact : see this Engine—be  
witness

Yourselves of its working ! Nay, handle my  
Types !

Each block bears a Letter : in order and fitness

I range them. Turn, Peter, the winch ! See,  
it gripes

What’sunder ! Letloose—draw ! Inregularstripes

275

## FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

Lies plain, at one pressure, your poem—touched,  
tinted,

Turned out to perfection! The sheet, late a  
blank,  
Filled—ready for reading,—not written but  
PRINTED!

Omniscient omnipotent God, Thee I thank,  
Thee ever, Thee only!—Thy creature that shrank 280

From no task Thou, Creator, imposedst! Creation  
Revealed me no object, from insect to Man,  
But bore Thy hand's impress: earth glowed  
with salvation:

“Hast sinned? Be thou saved, Fust! Con-  
tinue my plan,  
Who spake and earth was: with my word things  
began. 285

“As sound so went forth, to the sight be extended  
Word's mission henceforward! The task I  
assign,

Embrace—thy allegiance to evil is ended!

Have cheer, soul impregnate with purpose!  
Combine

Soul and body, give birth to my concept—called  
thine! 290

“Far and wide, North and South, East and  
West, have dominion

O'er thought, winged wonder, O Word! Tra-  
verse world

In sun-flash and sphere-song! Each beat of thy  
pinion

Bursts night, beckons day: once Truth's ban-  
ner unfurled,

Where 's Falsehood? Sun-smitten, to nothing-  
ness hurled!” 295

## AN EPILOGUE

More humbly—so, friends, did my fault find  
redemption.

I sinned, soul-entailed by the tether of sense :  
My captor reigned master : I plead no exemption  
From Satan's award to his servant : defence  
From the fiery and final assault would be—  
whence ?

300

By making—as man might—to truth restitution !  
Truth is God : trample lies and lies' father,  
God's foe !

Fix fact fast : truths change by an hour's revolution :

What deed's very doer, unaided, can show  
How 't was done a year—month—week—day—  
minute ago ?

305

At best, he relates it—another reports it—

A third—nay, a thousandth records it : and still  
Narration, tradition, no step but distorts it,

As down from truth's height it goes sliding until  
At the low level lie-mark it stops—whence no skill

310

Of the scribe, intervening too tardily, rescues  
—Once fallen—lost fact from lie's fate there.

What scribe

—Eyes horny with poring, hands crippled with  
desk-use,

Brains fretted by fancies—the volatile tribe  
That tease weary watchers—can boast that no  
bribe

315

Shuts eyes and frees hand and remits brain from  
toiling ?

Truth gained—can we stay, at whatever the  
stage,

## FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

Truth a-slide,—save her snow from its ultimate  
soiling

In mire,—by some process, stamp promptly on  
page

Fact spoiled by pen's plodding, make truth heritage 320

Not merely of clerics, but poured out, full measure,

On clowns—every mortal endowed with a mind?

Read, gentle and simple! Let labour win leisure

At last to bid truth do all duty assigned,

Not pause at the noble but pass to the hind! 325

How bring to effect such swift sure simultaneous

Unlimited multiplication? How spread

By an arm-sweep a hand-throw—no helping ex-  
traneous—

Truth broadcast o'er Europe? "The gold-  
smith," I said,

"Graves limning on gold: why not letters on lead?" 330

So, Tuscan artificer, grudge not thy pardon

To me who played false, made a furtive descent,

Found the sly secret workshop,—thy genius kept  
guard on

Too slackly for once,—and surprised thee low-  
bent

O'er thy labour—some chalice thy tool would  
indent 335

With a certain free scroll-work framed round by  
a border

Of foliage and fruitage: no scratching so fine,

No shading so shy but, in ordered disorder,

Each flourish came clear,—unbewildered by  
shine,

On the gold, irretrievably right, lay each line. 340

## AN EPILOGUE

How judge if thy hand worked thy will? By re-  
viewing,

Revising again and again, piece by piece,  
Tool's performance,—this way, as I watched.

'T was through glueing

A paper-like film-stuff—thin, smooth, void of  
crease,

On each cut of the graver : press hard ! at release, 345

No mark on the plate, but the paper showed  
double :

His work might proceed : as he judged—space  
or speck

Up he filled, forth he flung—was relieved thus  
from trouble

Lest wrong—once—were right never more :  
what could check

Advancement, completion? Thus lay at my beck— 350

At my call—triumph likewise! “For,” cried I,  
“what hinders

That gravings turns Printing? Stamp one word  
—not one

But fifty such, phoenix-like, spring from death's  
cinders,—

Since death is word's doom, clerics hide from  
the sun

As some churl closets up this rare chalice.” Go,  
run

355

Thy race now, Fust's child ! High, O Printing,  
and holy

Thy mission ! These types, see, I chop and  
I change

Till the words, every letter, a pageful, not slowly

Yet surely lies fixed : last of all, I arrange

A paper beneath, stamp it, loosen it !

# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

FIRST FRIEND

Strange ! 360

SECOND FRIEND

How simple exceedingly !

FUST

Bustle, my Schœffer !  
Set type,—quick, Genesheim ! Turn screw now !

THIRD FRIEND

Just that !

FOURTH FRIEND

And no such vast miracle !

FUST

“ Plough with my heifer,  
Ye find out my riddle,” quoth Samson, and pat  
He speaks to the purpose. Grapes squeezed in  
the vat 365

Yield to sight and to taste what is simple—a liquid  
Mere urchins may sip : but give time, let  
ferment—

You 've wine, manhood's master ! Well, “ *rectius*  
*si quid*

*Novistis im-per-ti-te !*” Wait the event,  
Then weigh the result ! But whate'er Thy intent, 370

O Thou, the one force in the whole variation  
Of visible nature,—at work—do I doubt ?—  
From Thy first to our last, in perpetual creation—

A film hides us from Thee—'twixt inside and out,  
A film, on this earth where Thou bringest about 375



## AN EPILOGUE

New marvels, new forms of the glorious, the  
gracious,

We bow to, we bless for: no star bursts heaven's  
dome

But Thy finger impels it, no weed peeps audacious  
Earth's clay-floor from out, but Thy finger  
makes room

For one world's-want the more in Thy Cosmos :  
presume

380

Shall Man, Microcosmos, to claim the conception  
Of grandeur, of beauty, in thought, word or  
deed ?

I toiled, but Thy light on my dubiourest step  
shone :

If I reach the glad goal, is it I who succeed  
Who stumbled at starting tripped up by a reed,

385

Or Thou ? Knowledge only and absolute, glory  
As utter be Thine who concedest a spark  
Of Thy spheric perfection to earth's transitory  
Existences ! Nothing that lives, but Thy mark  
Gives law to—life's light : what is doomed to the  
dark ?

390

Where 's ignorance ? Answer, creation ! What  
height,

What depth has escaped Thy commandment—  
to Know ?

What birth in the ore-bed but answers aright  
Thy sting at its heart which impels—bids  
“E'en so,

Not otherwise move or be motionless,—grow,

395

“Decline, disappear !” Is the plant in default  
How to bud, when to branch forth ? The bird  
and the beast

## FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

—Do they doubt if their safety be found in assault  
Or escape? Worm or fly, of what atoms the least  
But follows light's guidance,—will famish, not  
feast?

400

In such various degree, fly and worm, ore and plant,  
All know, none is witless : around each, a wall  
Encloses the portion, or ample or scant,  
Of Knowledge : beyond which one hair's  
breadth, for all

Lies blank—not so much as a blackness—a pall

405

Some sense unimagined must penetrate : plain  
Is only old licence to stand, walk or sit,  
Move so far and so wide in the narrow domain  
Allotted each nature for life's use : past it  
How immensity spreads does he guess? Not a whit.

410

Does he care? Just as little. Without? No,  
within

Concerns him : he Knows. Man Ignores—  
thanks to Thee

Who madest him know, but—in knowing—begin  
To know still new vastness of knowledge must be  
Outside him—to enter, to traverse, in fee

415

Have and hold ! “ Oh, Man's ignorance ! ” hear  
the fool whine !

How were it, for better or worse, didst thou grunt  
Contented with sapience—the lot of the swine

Who knows he was born for just truffles to  
hunt?—

Monks' Paradise—“ *Semper sint res uti sunt !* ”

420

No, Man's the prerogative—knowledge once  
gained—

To ignore,—find new knowledge to press for,  
to swerve

## AN EPILOGUE

In pursuit of, no, not for a moment : attained—  
Why, onward through ignorance ! Dare and  
deserve !

As still to its asymptote speedeth the curve, 425

So approximates Man—Thee, who, reachable not,  
Hast formed him to yearningly follow Thy whole  
Sole and single omniscience !

Such, friends, is my lot :  
I am back with the world : one more step to the  
goal

Thanks for reaching I render—Fust's help to  
Man's soul ! 430

Mere mechanical help ? So the hand gives a toss  
To the falcon,—aloft once, spread pinions and  
fly,

Beat air far and wide, up and down and across !

My Press strains a-tremble : whose masterful eye  
Will be first, in new regions, new truth to descry ? 435

Give chase, soul ! Be sure each new capture  
consigned

To my Types will go forth to the world, like  
God's bread

—Miraculous food not for body but mind,

Truth's manna ! How say you ? Put case that,  
instead

Of old leasing and lies, we superiorly fed 440

These Heretics, Hussites . . .

### FIRST FRIEND

First answer my query !  
If saved, art thou happy ?

# FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

FUST

I was and I am.

FIRST FRIEND

Thy visage confirms it : how comes, then, that—  
weary

And woe-begone late—was it show, was it sham?—  
We found thee sunk this wise ?

SECOND FRIEND

—In need of the dram 445

From the flask which a provident neighbour might  
carry !

FUST

Ah, friends, the fresh triumph soon flickers, fast  
fades !

I hailed Word's dispersion : could heartleaps but  
tarry !

Through me does Print furnish Truth wings ?  
The same aids

Cause Falsehood to range just as widely. What  
raids

450

On a region undreamed of does Printing enable  
Truth's foe to effect ! Printed leasing and lies  
May speed to the world's farthest corner—gross  
fable

No less than pure fact—to impede, neutralize,  
Abolish God's gift and Man's gain !

FIRST FRIEND

Dost surmise 455

What struck me at first blush ? Our Beghards,  
Waldenses,  
Jeronimites, Hussites—does one show his head,

## AN EPILOGUE

Spout heresy now ? Not a priest in his senses  
Deigns answer mere speech, but piles faggots  
instead,  
Refines as by fire, and, him silenced, all 's said. 460

Whereas if in future I pen an opusculè  
Defying retort, as of old when rash tongues  
Were easy to tame,—straight some knave of the  
Huss-School  
Prints answer forsooth ! Stop invisible lungs ?  
The barrel of blasphemy broached once, who bungs ? 465

### SECOND FRIEND

Does my sermon, next Easter, meet fitting accept-  
ance ?  
Each captious disputative boy has his quirk  
“ *An cuique credendum sit ?* ” Well the Church  
kept “ *ans* ”  
In order till Fust set his engine at work !  
What trash will come flying from Jew, Moor and  
Turk 470

When, goosequill, thy reign o'er the world is abol-  
ished !  
Goose—ominous name ! With a goose woe  
began :  
Quoth Huss—which means “ goose ” in his idiom  
unpolished—  
“ Ye burn now a Goose : there succeeds me a  
Swan  
Ye shall find quench your fire ! ”

FUST

I foresee such a man. 475



**ASOLANDO:  
FANCIES AND FACTS**





## TO MRS. ARTHUR BRONSON

*To WHOM but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses—some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence, and with yet another experience of the gracious hospitality now bestowed on me since so many a year,—adding a charm even to my residences at Venice, and leaving me little regret for the surprise and delight at my visits to Asolo in bygone days?*

*I unite, you will see, the disconnected poems by a title-name popularly ascribed to the inventiveness of the ancient secretary of Queen Cornaro whose palace-tower still overlooks us: Asolare —“to disport in the open air, amuse oneself at random.” The objection that such a word nowhere occurs in the works of the Cardinal is hardly important—Bembo was too thorough a purist to conserve in print a term which in talk he might possibly toy with: but the word is more likely derived from a Spanish source. I use it for love of the place, and in requital of your pleasant assurance that an early poem of mine first attracted you thither—where and elsewhere, at La Mura as Cà Alvisi, may all happiness attend you!*

*Gratefully and affectionately yours,*

*R. B.*

ASOLO: October 15, 1889.

# ASOLANDO :

## FANCIES AND FACTS

### PROLOGUE

“THE Poet’s age is sad : for why ?  
In youth, the natural world could show  
No common object but his eye  
At once involved with alien glow—  
His own soul’s iris-bow.

“And now a flower is just a flower :  
Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man—  
Simply themselves, uncinct by dower  
Of dyes which, when life’s day began,  
Round each in glory ran.”

Friend, did you need an optic glass,  
Which were your choice ? A lens to drape  
In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,  
Each object—or reveal its shape  
Clear outlined, past escape,

The naked very thing ?—so clear  
That, when you had the chance to gaze,  
You found its inmost self appear  
Through outer seeming—truth ablaze,  
Not falsehood’s fancy-haze ?

## ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS

How many a year, my Asolo,  
    Since—one step just from sea to land—  
I found you, loved yet feared you so—  
    For natural objects seemed to stand  
Palpably fire-clothed ! No—

No mastery of mine o'er these !  
    Terror with beauty, like the Bush  
Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,  
    Drop eyes to earthward ! Language ? Tush !  
Silence 't is awe decrees.

And now ? The lambent flame is—where ?  
    Lost from the naked world : earth, sky,  
Hill, vale, tree, flower,—Italia's rare  
    O'er-running beauty crowds the eye—  
But flame ? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower—they stand distinct,  
    Nature to know and name. What then ?  
A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked  
    Fancy from fact : see, all 's in ken :  
Has once my eyelid winked ?

No, for the purged ear apprehends  
    Earth's import, not the eye late dazed :  
The Voice said "Call my works thy friends !  
    At Nature dost thou shrink amazed ?  
God is it who transcends."

ASOLO : *Sept.* 6, 1889.

## ROSNY

WOE, he went galloping into the war,  
Clara, Clara !

Let us two dream : shall he 'scape with a scar ?

Scarcely disfigurement, rather a grace  
Making for manhood which nowise we mar :

See, while I kiss it, the flush on his face—  
Rosny, Rosny !

Light does he laugh : “With your love in my  
soul ”—

(Clara, Clara !)

“How could I other than—sound, safe and whole—

Cleave who opposed me asunder, yet stand  
Scatheless beside you, as, touching love's goal,  
Who won the race kneels, craves reward at  
your hand—

Rosny, Rosny ? ”

Ay, but if certain who envied should see !

Clara, Clara,

Certain who simper : “The hero for me

Hardly of life were so chary as miss  
Death—death and fame—that 's love's guerdon  
when She

Boasts, proud bereaved one, her choice fell on  
this

Rosny, Rosny ! ”

So,—go on dreaming,—he lies mid a heap

(Clara, Clara,)

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Of the slain by his hand : what is death but a  
sleep ?

Dead, with my portrait displayed on his breast :  
Love wrought his undoing : “ No prudence could  
keep

The love-maddened wretch from his fate.”

That is best,

Rosny, Rosny !

## DUBIETY

I WILL be happy if but for once :  
Only help me, Autumn weather,  
Me and my cares to screen, ensconce  
In luxury's sofa-lap of leather !

Sleep? Nay, comfort—with just a cloud  
Suffusing day too clear and bright :  
Eve's essence, the single drop allowed  
To sully, like milk, Noon's water-white.

Let gauziness shade, not shroud,—adjust,  
Dim and not deaden,—somehow sheathe  
Aught sharp in the rough world's busy thrust,  
If it reach me through dreaming's vapour-  
wreath.

Be life so, all things ever the same !  
For, what has disarmed the world? Outside,  
Quiet and peace : inside, nor blame  
Nor want, nor wish whate'er betide.

What is it like that has happened before?  
A dream? No dream, more real by much.  
A vision? But fanciful days of yore  
Brought many : mere musing seems not such.

Perhaps but a memory, after all !  
—Of what came once when a woman leant  
To feel for my brow where her kiss might fall.  
Truth ever, truth only the excellent !

## NOW

Out of your whole life give but a moment !  
All of your life that has gone before,  
All to come after it,—so you ignore  
So you make perfect the present,—condense,  
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,  
Thought and feeling and soul and sense—  
Merged in a moment which gives me at last  
You around me for once, you beneath me, above  
me—

Me—sure that despite of time future, time past,—  
This tick of our life-time 's one moment you love  
me !

How long such suspension may linger? Ah,  
Sweet—

The moment eternal—just that and no more—  
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core  
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips  
meet !

## HUMILITY

WHAT girl but, having gathered flowers,  
Stript the beds and spoilt the bowers,  
From the lapful light she carries  
Drops a careless bud?—nor tarries  
To regain the waif and stray :  
“Store enough for home”—she ’ll say.

So say I too : give your lover  
Heaps of loving—under, over,  
Whelm him—make the one the wealthy !  
Am I all so poor who—stealthy  
Work it was !—picked up what fell :  
Not the worst bud—who can tell ?



## POETICS

“So say the foolish !” Say the foolish so, Love?

“Flower she is, my rose”—or else “My very swan is she”—

Or perhaps “Yon maid-moon, blessing earth below, Love,

That art thou !”—to them, belike : no such vain words from me.

“Hush, rose, blush ! no balm like breath,” I chide it :

“Bend thy neck its best, swan,—hers the whiter curve !”

Be the moon the moon : my Love I place beside it :

What is she? Her human self,—no lower word will serve.

## SUMMUM BONUM

ALL the breath and the bloom of the year in the  
bag of one bee :

All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the  
heart of one gem :

In the core of one pearl all the shade and the  
shine of the sea :

Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder,  
wealth, and—how far above them—

Truth, that 's brighter than gem,

Trust, that 's purer than pearl,—

Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all  
were for me

In the kiss of one girl.

## A PEARL, A GIRL

A SIMPLE ring with a single stone  
To the vulgar eye no stone of price :  
Whisper the right word, that alone—  
Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,  
And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)  
Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole  
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('t is I this time that say)  
With little the world counts worthy praise :  
Utter the true word—out and away  
Escapes her soul : I am wrapt in blaze,  
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth  
Lord whole and sole—by a minute's birth—  
Through the love in a girl !

## SPECULATIVE

OTHERS may need new life in Heaven—  
Man, Nature, Art—made new, assume !  
Man with new mind old sense to leaven,  
Nature—new light to clear old gloom,  
Art that breaks bounds, gets soaring-room.

I shall pray : “ Fugitive as precious—  
Minutes which passed,—return, remain !  
Let earth’s old life once more enmesh us,  
You with old pleasure, me—old pain,  
So we but meet nor part again ! ”

## WHITE WITCHCRAFT

IF you and I could change to beasts, what beast  
should either be?

Shall you and I play Jove for once? Turn fox  
then, I decree!

Shy wild sweet stealer of the grapes! Now do  
your worst on me!

And thus you think to spite your friend—turned  
loathsome? What, a toad?

So, all men shrink and shun me! Dear men,  
pursue your road!

Leave but my crevice in the stone, a reptile's fit  
abode!

Now say your worst, Canidia! "He's loathsome,  
I allow:

There may or may not lurk a pearl beneath his  
puckered brow:

But see his eyes that follow mine—love lasts there  
anyhow."

## BAD DREAMS. I

LAST night I saw you in my sleep :

And how your charm of face was changed !

I asked "Some love, some faith you keep?"

You answered "Faith gone, love estranged."

Whereat I woke—a twofold bliss :

Waking was one, but next there came

This other : "Though I felt, for this,

My heart break, I loved on the same."

## BAD DREAMS. II

You in the flesh and here—

Your very self! Now, wait!

One word! May I hope or fear?

Must I speak in love or hate?

Stay while I ruminate!

5

The fact and each circumstance

Dare you disown? Not you!

That vast dome, that huge dance,

And the gloom which overgrew

A—possibly festive crew!

10

For why should men dance at all—

Why women—a crowd of both—

Unless they are gay? Strange ball—

Hands and feet plighting troth,

Yet partners enforced and loth!

15

Of who danced there, no shape

Did I recognize: thwart, perverse,

Each grasped each, past escape

In a whirl or weary or worse:

Man's sneer met woman's curse,

20

While he and she toiled as if

Their guardian set galley-slaves

To supple chained limbs grown stiff:

Unmanacled trulls and knaves—

The lash for who misbehaves!

25

## BAD DREAMS. II

And a gloom was, all the while,  
Deeper and deeper yet  
O'ergrowing the rank and file  
Of that army of haters—set  
To mimic love's fever-fret. 30

By the wall-side close I crept,  
Avoiding the livid maze,  
And, safely so far, outstepped  
On a chamber—a chapel, says  
My memory or betrays— 35

Closet-like, kept aloof  
From unseemly witnessing  
What sport made floor and roof  
Of the Devil's palace ring  
While his Damned amused their king. 40

Ay, for a low lamp burned,  
And a silence lay about  
What I, in the midst, discerned  
Though dimly till, past doubt,  
'T was a sort of throne stood out— 45

High seat with steps, at least :  
And the topmost step was filled  
By—whom ? What vested priest ?  
A stranger to me,—his guild,  
His cult, unreconciled 50

To my knowledge how guild and cult  
Are clothed in this world of ours :  
I pondered, but no result  
Came to—unless that Giaours  
So worship the Lower Powers. 55



## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

When suddenly who entered ?  
Who knelt—did you guess I saw ?  
Who—raising that face where centred  
Allegiance to love and law  
So lately—off-casting awe, 60

Down-treading reserve, away  
Thrusting respect . . . but mine  
Stands firm—firm still shall stay !  
Ask Satan ! for I decline  
To tell—what I saw, in fine ! 65

Yet here in the flesh you come—  
Your same self, form and face,—  
In the eyes, mirth still at home !  
On the lips, that commonplace  
Perfection of honest grace ! 70

Yet your errand is—needs must be—  
To palliate—well, explain,  
Expurgate in some degree  
Your soul of its ugly stain.  
Oh, you—the good in grain— 75

How was it your white took tinge ?  
“A mere dream”—never object !  
Sleep leaves a door on hinge  
Whence soul, ere our flesh suspect,  
Is off and away : detect 80

Her vagaries when loose, who can !  
Be she pranksome, be she prude,  
Disguise with the day began :  
With the night—ah, what ensued  
From draughts of a drink hell-brewed ? 85

## BAD DREAMS. II

Then She : “What a queer wild dream !  
And perhaps the best fun is—  
Myself had its fellow—I seem  
Scarce awake from yet. ’T was this—  
Shall I tell you ? First, a kiss !

90

“For the fault was just your own,—  
’T is myself expect apology :  
You warned me to let alone  
(Since our studies were mere philology)  
That ticklish (you said) Anthology.

95

“So, I dreamed that I passed *exam*  
Till a question posed me sore :  
‘Who translated this epigram  
By—an author we best ignore ?’  
And I answered ‘Hannah More’ !”

100

### BAD DREAMS. III

THIS was my dream : I saw a Forest  
Old as the earth, no track nor trace  
Of unmade man. Thou, Soul, explorest—  
Though in a trembling rapture—space  
Immeasurable ! Shrubs, turned trees,  
Trees that touch heaven, support its frieze  
Studded with sun and moon and star :  
While—oh, the enormous growths that bar  
Mine eye from penetrating past  
Their tangled twine where lurks—nay, lives  
Royally lone, some brute-type cast  
I' the rough, time cancels, man forgives.

On, Soul ! I saw a lucid City  
Of architectural device  
Every way perfect. Pause for pity,  
Lightning ! nor leave a cicatrice  
On those bright marbles, dome and spire,  
Structures palatial,—streets which mire  
Dares not defile, paved all too fine  
For human footstep's smirch, not thine—  
Proud solitary traverser,  
My Soul, of silent lengths of way—  
With what ecstatic dread, aver,  
Lest life start sanctioned by thy stay !

Ah, but the last sight was the hideous !  
A City, yes,—a Forest, true,—  
But each devouring each. Perfidious  
Snake-plants had strangled what I knew

### BAD DREAMS. III

Was a pavilion once : each oak  
Held on his horns some spoil he broke  
By surreptitiously beneath  
Upthrusting : pavements, as with teeth,  
Griped huge weed widening crack and split  
In squares and circles stone-work erst.  
Oh, Nature—good ! Oh, Art—no whit  
Less worthy ! Both in one—accurst !

## BAD DREAMS. IV

It happened thus : my slab, though new,  
Was getting weather-stained,—beside,  
Herbage, balm, peppermint o'ergrew  
Letter and letter : till you tried  
Somewhat, the Name was scarce descried.

That strong stern man my lover came :  
—Was he my lover? Call him, pray,  
My life's cold critic bent on blame  
Of all poor I could do or say  
To make me worth his love one day—

One far day when, by diligent  
And dutiful amending faults,  
Foibles, all weaknesses which went  
To challenge and excuse assaults  
Of culture wronged by taste that halts—

Discrepancies should mar no plan  
Symmetric of the qualities  
Claiming respect from—say—a man  
That 's strong and stern. “ Once more he pries  
Into me with those critic eyes ! ”

No question ! so—“ Conclude, condemn  
Each failure my poor self avows !  
Leave to its fate all you contemn !  
There 's Solomon's selected spouse :  
Earth needs must hold such maids—choose them ! ”

## BAD DREAMS. IV

Why, he was weeping ! Surely gone  
Sternness and strength : with eyes to ground  
And voice a broken monotone—

“Only be as you were ! Abound  
In foibles, faults,—laugh, robed and crowned

“As Folly’s veriest queen,—care I  
One feather-fluff ? Look pity, Love,  
On prostrate me—your foot shall try  
This forehead’s use—mount thence above,  
And reach what Heaven you dignify !”

Now, what could bring such change about ?  
The thought perplexed : till, following  
His gaze upon the ground,—why, out  
Came all the secret ! So, a thing  
Thus simple has deposed my king !

For, spite of weeds that strove to spoil  
Plain reading on the lettered slab,  
My name was clear enough—no soil  
Effaced the date when one chance stab  
Of scorn . . . if only ghosts might blab !

## INAPPREHENSIVENESS

WE two stood simply friend-like side by side,  
Viewing a twilight country far and wide,  
Till she at length broke silence. "How it towers  
Yonder, the ruin o'er this vale of ours!  
The West's faint flare behind it so relieves  
Its rugged outline—sight perhaps deceives,  
Or I could almost fancy that I see  
A branch wave plain—belike some wind-sown tree  
Chance-rooted where a missing turret was.  
What would I give for the perspective glass  
At home, to make out if 't is really so!  
Has Ruskin noticed here at Asolo  
That certain weed-growths on the ravaged wall  
Seem" . . . something that I could not say at all,  
My thought being rather—as absorbed she sent  
Look onward after look from eyes distent  
With longing to reach Heaven's gate left ajar—  
"Oh, fancies that might be, oh, facts that are!  
What of a wilding? By you stands, and may  
So stand unnoticed till the Judgment Day,  
One who, if once aware that your regard  
Claimed what his heart holds,—woke, as from its  
sward  
The flower, the dormant passion, so to speak—  
Then what a rush of life would startling wreak  
Revenge on your inapprehensive stare  
While, from the ruin and the West's faint flare,  
You let your eyes meet mine, touch what you  
term

## INAPPREHENSIVENESS

Quietude—that 's an universe in germ—  
The dormant passion needing but a look  
To burst into immense life ! ”

“ No, the book  
Which noticed how the wall-growths wave ” said  
she  
“ Was not by Ruskin.”

I said “ Vernon Lee ? ”



## WHICH ?

So, the three Court-ladies began  
Their trial of who judged best  
In esteeming the love of a man :  
Who preferred with most reason was thereby  
confessed  
Boy-Cupid's exemplary catcher and cager ;  
An Abbé crossed legs to decide on the wager.

First the Duchesse : " Mine for me—  
Who were it but God's for Him,  
And the King's for—who but he ?  
Both faithful and loyal, one grace more shall brim  
His cup with perfection : a lady's true lover,  
He holds—save his God and his king—none above  
her."

" I require "—outspoke the Marquise—  
" Pure thoughts, ay, but also fine deeds :  
Play the paladin must he, to please  
My whim, and—to prove my knight's service  
exceeds  
Your saint's and your loyalist's praying and  
kneeling—  
Show wounds, each wide mouth to my mercy  
appealing."

Then the Comtesse: " My choice be a wretch,  
Mere losel in body and soul,  
Thrice accurst ! What care I, so he stretch  
Arms to me his sole saviour, love's ultimate goal,

## WHICH?

Out of earth and men's noise—names of 'infidel,'  
'traitor,'  
Cast up at him? Crown me, crown's adjudicator!"

And the Abbé uncrossed his legs,  
Took snuff, a reflective pinch,  
Broke silence: "The question begs  
Much pondering ere I pronounce. Shall I  
flinch?  
The love which to one and one only has reference  
Seems terribly like what perhaps gains God's pre-  
ference."

## THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG

CRESCENZIO, the Pope's Legate at the High  
Council, Trent,  
—Year Fifteen hundred twenty-two, March  
Twenty-five—intent  
On writing letters to the Pope till late into the night,  
Rose, weary, to refresh himself, and saw a mon-  
strous sight :  
(I give mine Author's very words : he penned, I  
reindite.)

A black Dog of vast bigness, eyes flaming, ears  
that hung  
Down to the very ground almost, into the chamber  
sprung  
And made directly for him, and laid himself right  
under  
The table where Crescenzo wrote—who called in  
fear and wonder  
His servants in the ante-room, commanded every-  
one  
To look for and find out the beast : but, looking,  
they found none.

The Cardinal fell melancholy, then sick, soon after  
died :  
And at Verona, as he lay on his death-bed, he cried  
Aloud to drive away the Dog that leapt on his  
bed-side.  
Heaven keep us Protestants from harm : the rest  
. . . no ill betide !

## THE POPE AND THE NET

WHAT, he on whom our voices unanimously ran,  
Made Pope at our last Conclave? Full low his  
life began :  
His father earned the daily bread as just a fisher-  
man.

So much the more his boy minds book, gives proof  
of mother-wit,  
Becomes first Deacon, and then Priest, then  
Bishop : see him sit  
No less than Cardinal ere long, while no one cries  
“ Unfit ! ”

But someone smirks, some other smiles, jogs elbow  
and nods head :  
Each winks at each : “ ‘ I-faith, a rise ! Saint  
Peter’s net, instead  
Of sword and keys, is come in vogue ! ” You  
think he blushes red ?

Not he, of humble holy heart ! “ Unworthy me ! ”  
he sighs :  
“ From fisher’s drudge to Church’s prince—it is  
indeed a rise :  
So, here ’s my way to keep the fact for ever in my  
eyes ! ”

And straightway in his palace-hall, where com-  
monly is set

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Some coat-of-arms, some portraiture ancestral, lo,  
    we met  
His mean estate's reminder in his fisher-father's  
    net !

Which step conciliates all and some, stops cavil in  
    a trice :

“The humble holy heart that holds of new-born  
    pride no spice !

He 's just the saint to choose for Pope !” Each  
    adds “'T is my advice.”

So, Pope he was : and when we flocked—its  
    sacred slipper on—

To kiss his foot, we lifted eyes, alack the thing  
    was gone—

That guarantee of lowlihead,—eclipsed that star  
    which shone !

Each eyed his fellow, one and all kept silence. I  
    cried “Pish !

I 'll make me spokesman for the rest, express the  
    common wish.

Why, Father, is the net removed ?” “Son, it  
    hath caught the fish.”

## THE BEAN-FEAST

HE was the man—Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that  
swineherd's son :

He knew the right thing, did it, and thanked God  
when 't was done :

But of all he had to thank for, my fancy some-  
how leans

To thinking, what most moved him was a certain  
meal on beans.

For one day, as his wont was, in just enough dis-  
guise

As he went exploring wickedness,—to see with his  
own eyes

If law had due observance in the city's entrail  
dark

As well as where, i' the open, crime stood an ob-  
vious mark,—

He chanced, in a blind alley, on a tumble-down  
once house

Now hovel, vilest structure in Rome the ruinous :  
And, as his tact impelled him, Sixtus adventured  
bold,

To learn how lowliest subjects bore hunger, toil,  
and cold.

There sat they at high-supper—man and wife, lad  
and lass,

Poor as you please but cleanly all and care-free :  
pain that was

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

—Forgotten, pain as sure to be let bide aloof its  
time,—

Mightily munched the brave ones—what mattered  
gloom or grime?

Said Sixtus “Feast, my children! who works hard  
needs eat well.

I’m just a supervisor, would hear what you can tell.  
Do any wrongs want righting? The Father tries  
his best,

But, since he’s only mortal, sends such as I to  
test

The truth of all that’s told him—how folk like you  
may fare :

Come!—only don’t stop eating—when mouth has  
words to spare—

“You”—smiled he—“play the spokesman, bell-  
wether of the flock!

Are times good, masters gentle? Your grievances  
unlock!

How of your work and wages?—pleasures, if such  
may be—

Pains, as such are for certain.” Thus smiling  
questioned he.

But somehow, spite of smiling, awe stole upon the  
group—

An inexpressible surmise : why should a priest  
thus stoop—

Pry into what concerned folk? Each visage fell.  
Aware,

Cries Sixtus interposing : “Nay, children, have  
no care!

“Fear nothing! Who employs me requires the  
plain truth. Pelf

## MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

FROWNED the Laird on the Lord: "So, red-handed  
I catch thee?

Death-doomed by our Law of the Border!  
We've a gallows outside and a chiel to dispatch  
thee:

Who trespasses—hangs: all 's in order."

He met frown with smile, did the young English  
gallant:

Then the Laird's dame: "Nay, Husband, I  
beg!

He's comely: be merciful! Grace for the callant  
—If he marries our Muckle-mouth Meg!"

"No mile-wide-mouthed monster of yours do I  
marry:

Grant rather the gallows!" laughed he.

"Foul fare kith and kin of you—why do you  
tarry?"

"To tame your fierce temper!" quoth she.

"Shove him quick in the Hole, shut him fast for  
a week:

Cold, darkness and hunger work wonders:  
Who lion-like roars now, mouse-fashion will  
squeak,

And 'it rains' soon succeed to 'it thunders.'"



## MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

A week did he bide in the cold and the dark  
—Not hunger : for duly at morning  
In flitted a lass, and a voice like a lark  
Chirped “ Muckle-mouth Meg still ye ’re scorn-  
ing ?

“ Go hang, but here ’s parritch to hearten ye  
first ! ”

“ Did Meg’s muckle-mouth boast within some  
Such music as yours, mine should match it or  
burst :

No frog-jaws ! So tell folk, my Winsome ! ”

Soon week came to end, and, from Hole’s door  
set wide,

Out he marched, and there waited the lassie :  
“ Yon gallows, or Muckle-mouth Meg for a bride !  
Consider ! Sky ’s blue and turf ’s grassy :

“ Life ’s sweet : shall I say ye wed Muckle-mouth  
Meg ? ”

“ Not I ” quoth the stout heart : “ too eerie  
The mouth that can swallow a bubblyjock’s egg :  
Shall I let it munch mine ? Never, Dearie ! ”

“ Not Muckle-mouth Meg ? Wow, the obstinate  
man !

Perhaps he would rather wed me ! ”

“ Ay, would he—with just for a dowry your can ! ”

“ I ’m Muckle-mouth Meg ” chirruped she.

“ Then so—so—so—so— ” as he kissed her apace—

“ Will I widen thee out till thou turnest  
From Margaret Minnikin-mou’, by God’s grace,  
To Muckle-mouth Meg in good earnest ! ”

## ARCADES AMBO

- A.* You blame me that I ran away?  
Why, Sir, the enemy advanced :  
Balls flew about, and—who can say  
But one, if I stood firm, had glanced  
In my direction? Cowardice?  
I only know we don't live twice,  
Therefore—shun death, is my advice.
- B.* Shun death at all risks? Well, at some !  
True, I myself, Sir, though I scold  
The cowardly, by no means come  
Under reproof as overbold  
—I, who would have no end of brutes  
Cut up alive to guess what suits  
My case and saves my toe from shoots.

## THE LADY AND THE PAINTER

*She.* YET womanhood you reverence,  
So you profess !

*He.* With heart and soul.

*She.* Of which fact this is evidence !  
To help Art-Study,—for some dole  
Of certain wretched shillings,—you  
Induce a woman—virgin too—  
To strip and stand stark-naked ?

*He.* True.

*She.* Nor feel you so degrade her ?

*He.* What  
—(Excuse the interruption)—clings  
Half-savage-like around your hat ?

*She.* Ah, do they please you ? Wild-bird-wings !  
Next season,—Paris-prints assert,—  
We must go feathered to the skirt :  
My modiste keeps on the alert.

Owls, hawks, jays—swallows most approve . . .

*He.* Dare I speak plainly ?

*She.* Oh, I trust !

*He.* Then, Lady Blanche, it less would move  
In heart and soul of me disgust  
Did you strip off those spoils you wear,  
And stand—for thanks, not shillings—bare,  
To help Art like my Model there.

*She* well knew what absolved her—praise  
In me for God's surpassing good,

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Who granted to my reverent gaze

A type of purest womanhood.

*You*—clothed with murder of His best  
Of harmless beings—stand the test !

What is it *you* know ?

*She.*

That you jest !

## PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

STOP rowing ! This one of our bye-canals  
O'er a certain bridge you have to cross  
That 's named " Of the Angel " : listen why !  
The name " Of the Devil " too much appals  
Venetian acquaintance, so—his the loss, 5  
While the gain goes . . . look on high !

An angel visibly guards yon house :  
Above each scutcheon—a pair—stands he,  
Enfolds them with droop of either wing :  
The family's fortune were perilous 10  
Did he thence depart—you will soon agree,  
If I hitch into verse the thing.

For, once on a time, this house belonged  
To a lawyer of note, with law and to spare,  
But also with overmuch lust of gain : 15  
In the matter of law you were nowise wronged,  
But alas for the lucre ! He picked you bare  
To the bone. Did folk complain ?

" I exact " growled he " work's rightful due :  
'T is folk seek me, not I seek them. 20  
Advice at its price ! They succeed or fail,  
Get law in each case—and a lesson too :  
Keep clear of the Courts—is advice *ad rem* :  
They 'll remember, I 'll be bail ! "

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

So, he pocketed fee without a qualm. 25  
What reason for squeamishness? Labour done,  
To play he betook him with lightened heart,  
Ate, drank and made merry with song or psalm,  
Since the yoke of the Church is an easy one—  
Fits neck nor causes smart. 30

Brief : never was such an extortionate  
Rascal—the word has escaped my teeth  
And yet—(all 's down in a book no ass  
Indited, believe me !)—this reprobate  
Was punctual at prayer-time : gold lurked beneath 35  
Alloy of the rankest brass.

For, play the extortioner as he might,  
Fleece folk each day and all day long,  
There was this redeeming circumstance :  
He never lay down to sleep at night 40  
But he put up a prayer first, brief yet strong,  
“ Our Lady avert mischance ! ”

Now it happened at close of a fructuous week,  
“ I must ask ” quoth he “ some Saint to dine :  
I want that widow well out of my ears 45  
With her ailing and wailing. Who bade her seek  
Redress at my hands ? ‘ She was wronged ! ’  
Folk whine  
If to Law wrong right appears.

“ Matteo da Bascio—he 's my man !  
No less than Chief of the Capucins : 50  
His presence will surely suffumigate  
My house—fools think lies under a ban  
If somebody loses what somebody wins.  
Hark, there he knocks at the grate !

## PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

“Come in, thou blessed of Mother Church !  
I go and prepare—to bid, that is,  
My trusty and diligent servitor  
Get all things in readiness. Vain the search  
Through Venice for one to compare with this  
My model of ministrants : for—

55  
60

“For—once again, nay, three times over,  
My helpmate 's an ape ! so intelligent,  
I train him to drudge at household work :  
He toils and he moils, I live in clover :  
Oh, you shall see ! There 's a goodly scent—  
From his cooking or I 'm a Turk !

65

“Scarce need to descend and supervise :  
I 'll do it, however : wait here awhile !”  
So, down to the kitchen gaily scuttles  
Our host, nor notes the alarmed surmise  
Of the holy man. “O depth of guile !  
He blindly guzzles and guttles,

70

“While—who is it dresses the food and pours  
The liquor ? Some fiend—I make no doubt—  
In likeness of—which of the loathly brutes ?  
An ape ! Where hides he ? No bull that gores,  
No bear that hugs—'t is the mock and flout  
Of an ape, fiend's face that suits.

75

“So—out with thee, creature, wherever thou hidest !  
I charge thee, by virtue of . . . right do I judge !  
There skulks he perdue, crouching under the bed.  
Well done ! What, forsooth, in beast's shape thou  
confidest ?  
I know and would name thee but that I begrudge  
Breath spent on such carrion. Instead—

80

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

“I adjure thee by——” “Stay!” laughed the  
portent that rose 85  
From floor up to ceiling : “No need to adjure !  
See Satan in person, late ape by command  
Of Him thou adjurest in vain. A saint’s nose  
Scents brimstone though incense be burned for a  
lure.

Yet, hence ! for I ’m safe, understand ! 90

“’Tis my charge to convey to fit punishment’s place  
This lawyer, my liegeman, for cruelty wrought  
On his clients, the widow and orphan, poor souls  
He has plagued by exactions which proved law’s  
disgrace,  
Made equity void and to nothingness brought 95  
God’s pity. Fiends, on with fresh coals !”

“Stay !” nowise confounded, withstands Hell its  
match :

“How comes it, were truth in this story of thine,  
God’s punishment suffered a minute’s delay ?

Weeks, months have elapsed since thou squattedst  
at watch 100

For a spring on thy victim : what caused thee  
decline

Advantage till challenged to-day ?”

“That challenge I meet with contempt,” quoth the  
fiend.

“Thus much I acknowledge : the man’s armed in  
mail :

I wait till a joint’s loose, then quick ply my claws. 105  
Thy friend’s one good custom—he knows not—  
has screened

His flesh hitherto from what else would assail :  
At ‘Save me, Madonna !’ I pause.



## PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

"That prayer did the losel but once pretermitt,  
My pounce were upon him. I keep me attent : 110  
He 's in safety but till he 's caught napping.  
Enough !"

"Ay, enough !" smiles the saint—"for the biter  
is bit,  
The spy caught in somnolence. Vanish ! I 'm  
sent  
To smooth up what fiends do in rough."

"I vanish ? Through wall or through roof ?" the  
ripost 115  
Grinned gaily. "My orders were—'Leave not  
unharm'd

The abode of this lawyer ! Do damage to prove  
'T was for something thou quittedst the land of  
the lost—

To add to their number this unit !' Though charmed  
From descent there, on earth that 's above 120

"I may haply amerce him." "So do, and begone,  
I command thee ! For, look ! Though there 's  
doorway behind

And window before thee, go straight through the  
wall,

Leave a breach in the brickwork, a gap in the  
stone

For who passes to stare at !" "Spare speech !  
I 'm resigned : 125

Here goes !" roared the goblin, as all—

Wide bat-wings, spread arms and legs, tail out  
a-stream,

Crash obstacles went, right and left, as he soared  
Or else sank, was clean gone through the hole  
anyhow.

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

The Saint returned thanks : then a satisfied gleam <sup>130</sup>  
On the bald polished pate showed that triumph  
was scored.

“To dinner with appetite now !”

Down he trips. “In good time !” smirks the host.  
“Didst thou scent

Rich savour of roast meat ? Where hides he, my  
ape ?

Look alive, be alert ! He ’s away to wash plates. <sup>135</sup>  
Sit down, Saint ! What ’s here ? Dost examine  
a rent

In the napkin thou twistest and twirlest ? Agape . . .  
Ha, blood is it drips nor abates

“From thy wringing a cloth, late was lavendered  
fair ?

What means such a marvel ?” “Just this does  
it mean :

I convince and convict thee of sin !” answers <sup>140</sup>  
straight

The Saint, wringing on, wringing ever—O rare !—  
Blood—blood from a napery snow not more clean.

“A miracle shows thee thy state !

“See—blood thy extortions have wrung from the  
flesh <sup>145</sup>

Of thy clients who, sheep-like, arrived to be  
shorn

And left thee—or fleeced to the quick or so  
flayed

That, behold, their blood gurgles and grumbles  
afresh

To accuse thee ! Ay, down on thy knees, get up  
sworn

To restore ! Restitution once made,

<sup>150</sup>

## PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

“Sin no more ! Dost thou promise ? Absolved,  
then, arise !

Upstairs follow me ! Art amazed at yon breach ?  
Who battered and shattered and scattered, escape  
From thy purlieus obtaining ? That Father of Lies  
Thou wast wont to extol for his feats, all and  
each,

15

The Devil 's disguised as thine ape !”

Be sure that our lawyer was torn by remorse,  
Shed tears in a flood, vowed and swore so to  
alter

His ways that how else could our Saint but declare  
He was cleansed of past sin ? “For sin future  
—fare worse

16

Thou undoubtedly wilt,” warned the Saint,  
“shouldst thou falter

One whit !” “Oh, for that have no care !

“I am firm in my purposed amendment. But,  
prithee,

Must ever affront and affright me yon gap ?

Who made it for exit may find it of use

16

For entrance as easy. If, down in his smithy

He forges me fetters—when heated, mayhap,

He 'll up with an armful ! Broke loose—

“How bar him out henceforth ?” “Judiciously  
urged !”

Was the good man's reply. “How to baulk him  
is plain.

17

There 's nothing the Devil objects to so much,

So speedily flies from, as one of those purged

Of his presence, the angels who erst formed his  
train—

His, their emperor. Choose one of such !

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

“Get fashioned his likeness and set him on high 175  
At back of the breach thus adroitly filled up :  
Display him as guard of two scutcheons, thy arms :  
I warrant no devil attempts to get by  
And disturb thee so guarded. Eat, drink, dine  
and sup  
In thy rectitude, safe from alarms !” 180

So said and so done. See, the angel has place  
Where the Devil had passage ! All 's down in a  
book.

Gainsay me ? Consult it ! Still faithless ? Trust  
*me ?*

Trust Father Boverio who gave me the case  
In his Annals—gets of it, by hook or by crook, 185  
Two confirmative witnesses : three

Are surely enough to establish an act :  
And thereby we learn—would we ascertain truth—  
To trust wise tradition which took, at the time,  
Note that served till slow history ventured on fact, 190  
Though folk have their fling at tradition forsooth !  
Row, boys, fore and aft, rhyme and chime !

## BEATRICE SIGNORINI

THIS strange thing happened to a painter once :  
Viterbo boasts the man among her sons  
Of note, I seem to think : his ready tool  
Picked up its precepts in Cortona's school—  
That 's Pietro Berretini, whom they call 5  
Cortona, these Italians : greatish-small,  
Our painter was his pupil, by repute  
His match if not his master absolute,  
Though whether he spoiled fresco more or less,  
And what 's its fortune, scarce repays your guess. 10  
Still, for one circumstance, I save his name  
—Francesco Romanelli : do the same !  
He went to Rome and painted : there he knew  
A wonder of a woman painting too—  
For she, at least, was no Cortona's drudge : 15  
Witness that ardent fancy-shape—I judge  
A semblance of her soul—she called " Desire "  
With starry front for guide, where sits the fire  
She left to brighten Buonarroti's house.  
If you see Florence, pay that piece your vows, 20  
Though blockhead Baldinucci's mind, imbued  
With monkish morals, bade folk " Drape the nude  
And stop the scandal ! " quoth the record prim  
I borrow this of : hang his book and him !  
At Rome, then, where these fated ones met first, 25  
The blossom of his life had hardly burst  
While hers was blooming at full beauty's stand :  
No less Francesco—when half-ripe he scanned  
Consummate Artemisia—grew one want

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

To have her his and make her ministrant 30  
With every gift of body and of soul  
To him. In vain. Her sphery self was whole—  
Might only touch his orb at Art's sole point.  
Suppose he could persuade her to enjoin  
Her life—past, present, future—all in his 35  
At Art's sole point by some explosive kiss  
Of love through lips, would love's success defeat  
Artistry's haunting curse—the Incomplete?  
Artists no doubt they both were,—what beside  
Was she? who, long had felt heart, soul spread  
wide 40  
Her life out, knowing much and loving well,  
On either side Art's narrow space where fell  
Reflection from his own speck : but the germ  
Of individual genius—what we term  
The very self, the God-gift whence had grown 45  
Heart's life and soul's life,—how make that his  
own?  
Vainly his Art, reflected, smiled in small  
On Art's one facet of her ampler ball ;  
The rest, touch-free, took in, gave back heaven,  
earth,  
All where he was not. Hope, well-nigh ere birth 50  
Came to Desire, died off all-unfulfilled.  
“What though in Art I stand the abler-skilled,”  
(So he conceited : mediocrity  
Turns on itself the self-transforming eye)  
“If only Art were suing, mine would plead 55  
To purpose : man—by nature I exceed  
Woman the bounded : but how much beside  
She boasts, would sue in turn and be denied !  
Love her? My own wife loves me in a sort  
That suits us both : she takes the world's report 60  
Of what my work is worth, and, for the rest,  
Concedes that, while his consort keeps her nest,

## BEATRICE SIGNORINI

The eagle soars a licensed vagrant, lives  
A wide free life which she at least forgives—  
Good Beatrice Signorini! Well 65  
And wisely did I choose her. But the spell  
To subjugate this Artemisia—where?  
She passionless?—she resolute to care  
Nowise beyond the plain sufficiency  
Of fact that she is she and I am I 70  
—Acknowledged arbitrator for us both  
In her life as in mine which she were loth  
Even to learn the laws of? No, and no  
Twenty times over! Ay, it must be so:  
I for myself, alas!”

Whereon, instead 75  
Of the checked lover's-utterance—why, he said  
—Leaning above her easel: “Flesh is red”  
(Or some such just remark)—“by no means white  
As Guido's practice teaches: you are right.”  
Then came the better impulse: “What if pride 80  
Were wisely trampled on, whate'er betide?  
If I grow hers, not mine—join lives, confuse  
Bodies and spirits, gain not her but lose  
Myself to Artemisia? That were love!  
Of two souls—one must bend, one rule above: 85  
If I crouch under proudly, lord turned slave,  
Were it not worthier both than if she gave  
Herself—in treason to herself—to me?”

And, all the while, he felt it could not be.  
Such love were true love: love that way who  
can! 90

Someone that's born half woman not whole man:  
For man, prescribed man better or man worse,  
Why, whether microcosm or universe,  
What law prevails alike through great and small,  
The world and man—world's miniature we call? 95

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Male is the master. "That way"—smiled and  
sighed

Our true male estimator—"puts her pride  
My wife in making me the outlet whence  
She learns all Heaven allows : 't is my pretence  
To paint : her lord should do what else but paint? 100  
Do I break brushes, cloister me turned saint?  
Then, best of all suits sanctity her spouse  
Who acts for Heaven, allows and disallows  
At pleasure, past appeal, the right, the wrong  
In all things. That 's my wife's way. But this  
strong 105

Confident Artemisia—an adept  
In Art does she conceit herself? ' Except  
In just this instance,' tell her, ' no one draws  
More rigidly observant of the laws  
Of right design : yet here,—permit me hint,— 110  
If the acromion had a deeper dint,  
That shoulder were perfection.' What surprise  
—Nay scorn, shoots black fire from those startled  
eyes!

She to be lessoned in design forsooth !  
I'm doomed and done for, since I spoke the truth. 115  
Make my own work the subject of dispute—  
Fails it of just perfection absolute  
Somewhere? Those motors, flexors,—don't I  
know

Ser Santi, styled 'Tirititototo  
The pencil-prig,' might blame them? Yet my  
wife— 120

Were he and his nicknamer brought to life,  
Tito and Titian, to pronounce again—  
Ask her who knows more—I or the great Twain  
Our colourist and draughtsman !

"I help her,  
Not she helps me ; and neither shall demur 125



## BEATRICE SIGNORINI

Because my portion is——” he chose to think—  
“Quite other than a woman’s : I may drink  
At many waters, must repose by none—  
Rather arise and fare forth, having done  
Duty to one new excellence the more, 130  
Ablar thereby, though impotent before  
So much was gained of knowledge. Best depart  
From this last lady I have learned by heart !”

Thus he concluded of himself—resigned  
To play the man and master : “Man boasts mind : 135  
Woman, man’s sport calls mistress, to the same  
Does body’s suit and service. Would she claim  
—My placid Beatricé-wife—pretence  
Even to blame her lord if, going hence,  
He wistfully regards one whom—did fate 140  
Concede—he might accept queen, abdicate  
Kingship because of?—one of no meek sort  
But masterful as he : man’s match in short?  
Oh, there ’s no secret I were best conceal !  
Bicé shall know ; and should a stray tear steal 145  
From out the blue eye, stain the rose cheek—bah !  
A smile, a word ’s gay reassurance—ah,  
With kissing interspersed,—shall make amends,  
Turn pain to pleasure.”

“What, in truth so ends  
Abruptly, do you say, our intercourse?” 150  
Next day, asked Artemisia : “I ’ll divorce  
Husband and wife no longer. Go your ways,  
Leave Rome ! Viterbo owns no equal, says  
The bye-word, for fair women : you, no doubt,  
May boast a paragon all specks without, 155  
Using the painter’s privilege to choose  
Among what ’s rarest. Will your wife refuse  
Acceptance from—no rival—of a gift?  
You paint the human figure I make shift

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Humbly to reproduce : but, in my hours 160  
Of idlesse, what I fain would paint is—flowers.  
Look now !”

She twitched aside a veiling cloth.  
“ Here is my keepsake—frame and picture both :  
For see, the frame is all of flowers festooned  
About an empty space,—left thus, to wound 165  
No natural susceptibility :  
How can I guess ? ’T is you must fill, not I,  
The central space with—her whom you like best !  
That is your business, mine has been the rest.  
But judge !”

How judge them ? Each of us, in flowers, 170  
Chooses his love, allies it with past hours,  
Old meetings, vanished forms and faces : no—  
Here let each favourite unmolested blow  
For one heart’s homage, no tongue’s banal praise,  
Whether the rose appealingly bade “ Gaze 175  
Your fill on me, sultana who dethrone  
The gaudy tulip !” or ’t was “ Me alone  
Rather do homage to, who lily am,  
No unabashed rose !” “ Do I vainly cram  
My cup with sweets, your jonquil ?” “ Why forget 180  
Vernal endearments with the violet ?”  
So they contested yet concerted, all  
As one, to circle round about, enthrall  
Yet, self-forgetting, push to prominence  
The midmost wonder, gained no matter whence. 185

There ’s a tale extant, in a book I conned  
Long years ago, which treats of things beyond  
The common, antique times and countries queer  
And customs strange to match. “ ’T is said, last  
year,”

(Recounts my author,) “ that the King had mind 190  
To view his kingdom—guessed at from behind

## BEATRICE SIGNORINI

A palace-window hitherto. Announced  
No sooner was such purpose than 't was pounced  
Upon by all the ladies of the land—  
Loyal but light of life : they formed a band 195  
Of loveliest ones but lithest also, since  
Proudly they all combined to bear their prince.  
Backs joined to breasts,—arms, legs,—nay, ankles,  
wrists,  
Hands, feet, I know not by what turns and twists,  
So interwoven lay that you believed 200  
'T was one sole beast of burden which received  
The monarch on its back, of breadth not scant  
Since fifty girls made one white elephant.”  
So with the fifty flowers which shapes and hues  
Blent, as I tell, and made one fast yet loose 205  
Mixture of beauties, composite, distinct  
No less in each combining flower that linked  
With flower to form a fit environment  
For—whom might be the painter's heart's intent  
Thus, in the midst enhaloed, to enshrine? 210

“This glory-guarded middle space—is mine?  
For me to fill?”

“For you, my Friend! We part,  
Never perchance to meet again. Your Art—  
What if I mean it—so to speak—shall wed  
My own, be witness of the life we led 215  
When sometimes it has seemed our souls near  
found  
Each one the other as its mate—unbound  
Had yours been haply from the better choice  
—Beautiful Biccé: 't is the common voice,  
The crowning verdict. Make whom you like best 220  
Queen of the central space, and manifest  
Your predilection for what flower beyond  
All flowers finds favour with you. I am fond

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Of—say—yon rose's rich predominance,  
While you—what wonder ?—more affect the glance 225  
The gentler violet from its leafy screen  
Ventures : so—choose your flower and paint your  
queen ! ”

Oh but the man was ready, head as hand,  
Instructed and adroit. “Just as you stand,  
Stay and be made—would Nature but relent— 230  
By Art immortal ! ”

Every implement  
In tempting reach—a palette primed, each squeeze  
Of oil-paint in its proper patch—with these,  
Brushes, a veritable sheaf to grasp !  
He worked as he had never dared.

“Unclasp 235  
My Art from yours who can ! ”—he cried at length,  
As down he threw the pencil—“Grace from  
Strength

Dissociate, from your flowery fringe detach  
My face of whom it frames,—the feat will match  
With that of Time should Time from me extract 240  
Your memory, Artemisia ! ” And in fact,—  
What with the pricking impulse, sudden glow  
Of soul—head, hand co-operated so  
That face was worthy of its frame, 't is said—  
Perfect, suppose !

They parted. Soon instead 245  
Of Rome was home,—of Artemisia—well,  
The placid-perfect wife. And it befell  
That after the first incontestably  
Blestest of all blisses (—wherefore try  
Your patience with embracings and the rest 250  
Due from Calypso's all-unwilling guest  
To his Penelope ?)—there somehow came  
The coolness which as duly follows flame.

## BEATRICE SIGNORINI

So, one day, "What if we inspect the gifts  
My Art has gained us?"

Now the wife uplifts 255  
A casket-lid, now tries a medal's chain  
Round her own lithe neck, fits a ring in vain  
—Too loose on the fine finger,—vows and swears  
The jewel with two pendent pearls like pears  
Betters a lady's bosom—witness else ! 260  
And so forth, while Ulysses smiles.

"Such spells  
Subdue such natures—sex must worship toys  
—Trinkets and trash : yet, ah, quite other joys  
Must stir from sleep the passionate abyss  
Of—such an one as her I know—not this 265  
My gentle consort with the milk for blood !  
Why, did it chance that in a careless mood  
(In those old days, gone—never to return—  
When we talked—she to teach and I to learn)  
I dropped a word, a hint which might imply 270  
Consorts exist—how quick flashed fire from eye,  
Brow blackened, lip was pinched by furious lip !  
I needed no reminder of my slip :  
One warning taught me wisdom. Whereas here . . .  
Aha, a sportive fancy ! Eh, what fear 275  
Of harm to follow ? Just a whim indulged !

"My Beatricé, there 's an undivulged  
Surprise in store for you : the moment 's fit  
For letting loose a secret : out with it !  
Tributes to worth, you rightly estimate 280  
These gifts of Prince and Bishop, Church and  
State :

Yet, may I tell you ? Tastes so disagree !  
There 's one gift, preciouslest of all to me,  
I doubt if you would value as well worth  
The obvious sparkling gauds that men unearth 285

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

For toy-cult mainly of you womankind ;  
Such make you marvel, I concede : while blind  
The sex proves to the greater marvel here  
I veil to baulk its envy. Be sincere !  
Say, should you search creation far and wide, 290  
Was ever face like this ? ”

He drew aside  
The veil, displayed the flower-framed portrait  
kept  
For private delectation.

No adept  
In florist's lore more accurately named  
And praised or, as appropriately, blamed 295  
Specimen after specimen of skill,  
Than Bicé. “ Rightly placed the daffodil—  
Scarcely so right the blue germander. Grey  
Good mouse-ear ! Hardly your auricula  
Is powdered white enough. It seems to me 300  
Scarlet not crimson, that anemone :  
But there 's amends in the pink saxifrage.  
O darling dear ones, let me disengage  
You innocents from what your harmlessness  
Clasps lovingly ! Out thou from their caress, 305  
Serpent ! ”

Whereat forth-flashing from her coils  
On coils of hair, the *spilla* in its toils  
Of yellow wealth, the dagger-plaything kept  
To pin its plaits together, life-like leapt  
And—woe to all inside the coronal ! 310  
Stab followed stab,—cut, slash, she ruined all  
The masterpiece. Alack for eyes and mouth  
And dimples and endearment—North and South,  
East, West, the tatters in a fury flew :  
There yawned the circlet. What remained to  
do ? 315

## BEATRICE SIGNORINI

She flung the weapon, and, with folded arms  
And mien defiant of such low alarms  
As death and doom beyond death, Bice stood  
Passively statuesque, in quietude  
Awaiting judgment.

And out judgment burst 320  
With frank unloading of love's laughter, first  
Freed from its unsuspected source. Some throe  
Must needs unlock love's prison-bars, let flow  
The joyance.

"Then you ever were, still are,  
And henceforth shall be—no occulted star 325  
But my resplendent Bice, sun-revealed,  
Full-rondure! Woman-glory unconcealed,  
So front me, find and claim and take your  
own—

My soul and body yours and yours alone,  
As you are mine, mine wholly! Heart's love,  
take— 330

Use your possession—stab or stay at will  
Here—hating, saving—woman with the skill  
To make man beast or god!"

And so it proved :  
For, as beseemed new godship, thus he loved,  
Past power to change, until his dying-day,— 335  
Good fellow! And I fain would hope—some  
say

Indeed for certain—that our painter's toils  
At fresco-splashing, finer stroke in oils,  
Were not so mediocre after all ;  
Perhaps the work appears unduly small 340  
From having loomed too large in old esteem,  
Patronized by late Papacy. I seem  
Myself to have cast eyes on certain work  
In sundry galleries, no judge needs shirk  
From moderately praising. He designed 345

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Correctly, nor in colour lagged behind  
His age : but both in Florence and in Rome  
The elder race so make themselves at home  
That scarce we give a glance to ceilingfuls  
Of such like as Francesco. Still, one culls  
From out the heaped laudations of the time  
The pretty incident I put in rhyme.

350



## FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT

*He.* AH, the bird-like fluting  
Through the ash-tops yonder—  
Bullfinch-bubbings, soft sounds suiting  
What sweet thoughts, I wonder?  
Fine-pearled notes that surely 5  
Gather, dewdrop-fashion,  
Deep-down in some heart which purely  
Secretes globuled passion—  
Passion insuppressive—  
Such is piped, for certain ; 10  
Love, no doubt, nay, love excessive  
'T is, your ash-tops curtain.

Would your ash-tops open  
We might spy the player—  
Seek and find some sense which no pen 15  
Yet from singer, sayer,  
Ever has extracted :  
Never, to my knowledge,  
Yet has pedantry enacted  
That, in Cupid's College, 20  
Just this variation  
Of the old old yearning  
Should by plain speech have salvation,  
Yield new men new learning.

“ Love ! ” but what love, nicely 25  
New from old departed,  
Would the player teach precisely?  
First of all, he started

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

In my brain Assurance—  
Trust—entire Contentment— 30  
Passion proved by much endurance ;  
Then came—not resentment,  
No, but simply Sorrow :  
What was seen had vanished :  
Yesterday so blue ! To-morrow 35  
Blank, all sunshine banished.

Hark ! 'T is Hope resurges,  
Struggling through obstruction—  
Forces a poor smile which verges  
On Joy's introduction. 40  
Now, perhaps, mere Musing :  
“ Holds earth such a wonder ?  
Fairy-mortal, soul-sense-fusing  
Past thought's power to sunder ! ”  
What ? calm Acquiescence ? 45  
“ Daisied turf gives room to  
Trefoil, plucked once in her presence—  
Growing by her tomb too ! ”

*She.* All 's your fancy-spinning !  
Here 's the fact : a neighbour 50  
Never-ending, still beginning,  
Recreates his labour :  
Deep o'er desk he drudges,  
Adds, divides, subtracts and  
Multiplies, until he judges 55  
Noonday-hour's exact sand  
Shows the hourglass emptied :  
Then comes lawful leisure,  
Minutes rare from toil exempted,  
Fit to spend in pleasure. 60

Out then with—what treatise ?  
*Youth's Complete Instructor*

## FLUTE-MUSIC

*How to play the Flute. Quid petis?*

Follow Youth's conductor	
On and on, through <i>Easy</i> ,	65
Up to <i>Harder, Hardest</i>	
<i>Flute-piece</i> , till thou, flautist wheezy,	
Possibly discardest	
Tootlings hoarse and husky,	
Mayst expend with courage	70
Breath—on tunes once bright now dusky—	
Meant to cool thy porridge.	

That 's an air of Tulou's	
He maltreats persistent,	
Till as lief I 'd hear some Zulu's	75
Bone-piped bag, breath-distent,	
Madden native dances.	
I 'm the man's familiar :	
Unexpectedness enhances	
What your ear's auxiliar	80
—Fancy—finds suggestive.	
Listen ! That 's <i>legato</i>	
Rightly played, his fingers restive	
Touch as if <i>staccato</i> .	

<i>He.</i> Ah, you trick-betrayer !	85
Telling tales, unwise one ?	
So the secret of the player	
Was—he could surprise one	
Well-nigh into trusting	
Here was a musician	90
Skilled consummately, yet lusting	
Through no vile ambition	
After making captive	
All the world,—rewarded	
Amplly by one stranger's rapture,	95
Common praise discarded.	

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

So, without assistance  
Such as music rightly  
Needs and claims,—defying distance,  
Overleaping lightly 100  
Obstacles which hinder,—  
He, for my approval,  
All the same and all the kinder  
Made mine what might move all  
Earth to kneel adoring : 105  
Took—while he piped Gounod's  
Bit of passionate imploring—  
Me for Juliet : who knows ?

No ! as you explain things,  
All 's mere repetition, 110  
Practise-pother : of all vain things  
Why waste pooh or pish on  
Toilsome effort—never  
Ending, still beginning—  
After what should pay endeavour 115  
—Right-performance ? winning  
Weariness from you who,  
Ready to admire some  
Owl's fresh hooting—Tu-whit, tu-who—  
Find stale thrush-songs tiresome. 120

*She.* Songs, Spring thought perfection,  
Summer criticizes :  
What in May escaped detection,  
August, past surprises,  
Notes, and names each blunder. 125  
You, the just-initiate,  
Praise to heart's content (what wonder ?)  
Tootings I hear vitiate  
Romeo's serenading—  
I who, times full twenty, 130

## FLUTE-MUSIC

Turned to ice—no ash-tops aiding—  
At his *caldamente*.

So, 't was distance altered  
Sharps to flats? The missing  
Bar when syncopation faltered 135  
(You thought—paused for kissing !)  
Ash-tops too felonious  
Intercepted? Rather  
Say—they well-nigh made euphonious  
Discord, helped to gather 140  
Phrase, by phrase, turn patches  
Into simulated  
Unity which botching matches,—  
Scraps reintegrated.

*He.* Sweet, are you suggestive 145  
Of an old suspicion  
Which has always found me restive  
To its admonition  
When it ventured whisper  
“Fool, the strifes and struggles 150  
Of your trembler—blusher—lisper  
Were so many juggles,  
Tricks tried—oh, so often !—  
Which once more do duty,  
Find again a heart to soften, 155  
Soul to snare with beauty.”

Birth-blush of the briar-rose,  
Mist-bloom of the hedge-sloe,  
Someone gains the prize : admire rose  
Would he, when noon's wedge—slow— 160  
Sure, has pushed, expanded  
Rathe pink to raw redness?  
Would he covet sloe when sanded  
By road-dust to deadness?

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

So—restore their value !  
Ply a water-sprinkle !  
Then guess sloe is fingered, shall you ?  
Find in rose a wrinkle ?

165

Here what played Aquarius ?  
Distance—ash-tops aiding,  
Reconciled scraps else contrarious,  
Brightened stuff fast fading.

170

Distance—call your shyness :  
Was the fair one peevish ?  
Coyness softened out of slyness.

175

Was she cunning, thievish,  
All-but-proved impostor ?  
Bear but one day's exile,  
Ugly traits were wholly lost or  
Screened by fancies flexile—

180

Ash-tops these, you take me ?  
Fancies' interference  
Changed . . .

But since I sleep, don't wake me !  
What if all 's appearance ?  
Is not outside seeming  
Real as substance inside ?

185

Both are facts, so leave me dreaming :  
If who loses wins I 'd  
Ever lose,—conjecture,  
From one phrase trilled deftly,  
All the piece. So, end your lecture,  
Let who lied be left lie !

190

“IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS  
EST——”

WHAT it was struck the terror into me ?  
This, Publius : closer ! while we wait our turn  
I 'll tell you. Water 's warm (they ring inside)  
At the eighth hour, till when no use to bathe.

Here in the vestibule where now we sit, 5  
One scarce stood yesterday, the throng was such  
Of loyal gapers, folk all eye and ear  
While Lucius Varius Rufus in their midst  
Read out that long-planned late-completed piece,  
His Panegyric on the Emperor. 10  
“ Nobody like him ” little Flaccus laughed  
“ At leading forth an Epos with due pomp !  
Only, when godlike Cæsar swells the theme,  
How should mere mortals hope to praise aright ?  
Tell me, thou offshoot of Etruscan kings ! ” 15  
Whereat Mæcenus smiling sighed assent.

I paid my quadrans, left the Thermæ's roar  
Of rapture as the poet asked “ What place  
Among the godships Jove, for Cæsar's sake,  
Would bid its actual occupant vacate 20  
In favour of the new divinity ? ”  
And got the expected answer “ Yield thine own ! ” —  
Jove thus dethroned, I somehow wanted air,  
And found myself a-pacing street and street,  
Letting the sunset, rosy over Rome, 25  
Clear my head dizzy with the hubbub—say

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

As if thought's dance therein had kicked up dust  
By trampling on all else : the world lay prone,  
As—poet-propped, in brave hexameters—  
Their subject triumphed up from man to God. 30  
Caius Octavius Cæsar the August—  
Where was escape from his prepotency?  
I judge I may have passed—how many piles  
Of structure dropt like doles from his free hand  
To Rome on every side? Why, right and left, 35  
For temples you 've the Thundering Jupiter,  
Avenging Mars, Apollo Palatine :  
How count Piazza, Forum—there 's a third  
All but completed. You 've the Theatre  
Named of Marcellus—all his work, such work !— 40  
One thought still ending, dominating all—  
With warrant Varius sang “ Be Cæsar God ! ”  
By what a hold arrests he Fortune's wheel,  
Obtaining and retaining heaven and earth  
Through Fortune, if you like, but favour—no ! 45  
For the great deeds flashed by me, fast and thick  
As stars which storm the sky on autumn nights—  
Those conquests ! but peace crowned them,—so,  
of peace !  
Count up his titles only—these, in few—  
Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times, 50  
Emperor, nay—the glory topping all—  
Hailed Father of his Country, last and best  
Of titles, by himself accepted so :  
And why not? See but feats achieved in Rome—  
Not to say, Italy—he planted there 55  
Some thirty colonies—but Rome itself  
All new-built, “ marble now, brick once,” he  
boasts :  
This Portico, that Circus. Would you sail?  
He has drained Tiber for you : would you walk?  
He straightened out the long Flaminian Way. 60



“IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST—”

Poor? Profit by his score of donatives!  
Rich—that is, mirthful? Half-a-hundred games  
Challenge your choice! There's Rome—for you  
and me

Only? The centre of the world besides!  
For, look the wide world over, where ends Rome? 65  
To sunrise? There's Euphrates—all between!  
To sunset? Ocean and immensity:  
North,—stare till Danube stops you: South, see  
Nile,

The Desert and the earth-upholding Mount.  
Well may the poet-people each with each 70  
Vie in his praise, our company of swans,  
Virgil and Horace, singers—in their way—  
Nearly as good as Varius, though less famed:  
Well may they cry, “No mortal, plainly God!”

Thus to myself myself said, while I walked: 75  
Or would have said, could thought attain to speech,  
Clean baffled by enormity of bliss  
The while I strove to scale its heights and sound  
Its depths—this masterdom o'er all the world  
Of one who was but born,—like you, like me, 80  
Like all the world he owns,—of flesh and blood.  
But he—how grasp, how gauge his own conceit  
Of bliss to me near inconceivable?  
Or—since such flight too much makes reel the  
brain—

Let's sink—and so take refuge, as it were, 85  
From life's excessive altitude—to life's  
Breathable wayside shelter at its base!  
If looms thus large this Cæsar to myself  
—Of senatorial rank and somebody—  
How must he strike the vulgar nameless crowd, 90  
Innumerable swarm that's nobody at all?  
Why,—for an instance,—much as yon gold shape

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Crowned, sceptred, on the temple opposite—  
Fulgurant Jupiter—must daze the sense  
Of—say, yon outcast begging from its step ! 95  
What, anti-Cæsar, monarch in the mud,  
As he is pinnaced above thy pate?  
Ay, beg away ! thy lot contrasts full well  
With his whose bounty yields thee this support—  
Our Holy and Inviolable One, 100  
Cæsar, whose bounty built the fane above !  
Dost read my thought? Thy garb, alack, displays  
Sore usage truly in each rent and stain—  
Faugh ! Wash though in Suburra ! 'Ware the  
dogs

Who may not so disdain a meal on thee ! 105  
What, stretchest forth a palm to catch my alms ?  
Aha, why yes : I must appear—who knows?—  
I, in my toga, to thy rags and thee—  
Quæstor—nay, Ædile, Censor—Pol ! perhaps  
The very City-Prætor's noble self ! 110  
As to me Cæsar, so to thee am I ?  
Good : nor in vain shall prove thy quest, poor rogue !  
Hither—hold palm out—take this quarter-as !

And who did take it ? As he raised his head,  
(My gesture was a trifle—well, abrupt), 115  
Back fell the broad flap of the peasant's-hat,  
The homespun cloak that muffled half his cheek  
Dropped somewhat, and I had a glimpse—just one !  
One was enough. Whose—whose might be the  
face ?

That unkempt careless hair—brown, yellowish— 120  
Those sparkling eyes beneath their eyebrows'  
ridge

(Each meets each, and the hawk-nose rules between)  
—That was enough, no glimpse was needed more !  
And terrifyingly into my mind

“IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST—”

Came that quick-hushed report was whispered us, 125

“They do say, once a year in sordid garb  
He plays the mendicant, sits all day long,  
Asking and taking alms of who may pass,  
And so averting, if submission help,  
Fate’s envy, the dread chance and change of  
things 130

When Fortune—for a word, a look, a nought—  
Turns spiteful and—the petted lioness—  
Strikes with her sudden paw, and prone falls each  
Who patted late her neck superiorly,  
Or trifled with those claw-tips velvet-sheathed.” 135  
“He’s God!” shouts Lucius Varius Rufus: “Man  
And worms’-meat any moment!” mutters low  
Some Power, admonishing the mortal-born.

Ay, do you mind? There’s meaning in the  
fact

That whoso conquers, triumphs, enters Rome, 140  
Climbing the Capitolian, soaring thus  
To glory’s summit,—Publius, do you mark—  
Ever the same attendant who, behind,  
Above the Conqueror’s head supports the crown  
All-too-demonstrative for human wear, 145  
—One hand’s employment—all the while reserves  
Its fellow, backward-flung, to point how, close  
Appended from the car, beneath the foot  
Of the up-borne exulting Conqueror,  
Frown—half-descried—the instruments of shame, 150  
The malefactor’s due. Crown, now—Cross, when?

Who stands secure? Are even Gods so safe?  
Jupiter that just now is dominant—  
Are not there ancient dismal tales how once  
A predecessor reigned ere Saturn came, 155  
And who can say if Jupiter be last?

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Was it for nothing the grey Sibyl wrote  
“Cæsar Augustus regnant, shall be born  
In blind Judæa”—one to master him,  
Him and the universe? An old-wife’s tale?

160

Bath-drudge! Here, slave! No cheating! Our  
turn next.

No loitering, or be sure you taste the lash!  
Two strigils, two oil-drippers, each a sponge!

## DEVELOPMENT

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.  
When I was five years old, I asked him once  
“What do you read about?”

“The siege of Troy.”

“What is a siege and what is Troy?”

Whereat

He piled up chairs and tables for a town, 5

Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat

—Helen, enticed away from home (he said)

By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close

Under the footstool, being cowardly,

But whom—since she was worth the pains, poor  
puss— 10

Towzer and Tray,—our dogs, the Atreidai,—  
sought

By taking Troy to get possession of

—Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,

(My pony in the stable)—forth would prance

And put to flight Hector—our page-boy's self. 15

This taught me who was who and what was  
what :

So far I rightly understood the case

At five years old : a huge delight it proved

And still proves—thanks to that instructor sage

My Father, who knew better than turn straight 20

Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,

Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-  
blind,

Content with darkness and vacuity.

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

It happened, two or three years afterward,  
That—I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege— 25  
My Father came upon our make-believe.

“How would you like to read yourself the tale  
Properly told, of which I gave you first  
Merely such notion as a boy could bear?  
Pope, now, would give you the precise account 30  
Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,  
You 'll hear—who knows?—from Homer's very  
mouth.

Learn Greek by all means, read the ‘Blind Old  
Man,  
Sweetest of Singers’—*tuphlos* which means ‘blind,’  
*Hedistos* which means ‘sweetest.’ Time enough! 35  
Try, anyhow, to master him some day;  
Until when, take what serves for substitute,  
Read Pope, by all means!”

So I ran through Pope,  
Enjoyed the tale—what history so true?  
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged, 40  
Grew fitter thus for what was promised next—  
The very thing itself, the actual words,  
When I could turn—say, Buttman to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine  
day,  
“Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less? 45  
There's Heine, where the big books block the  
shelf:  
Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!”

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned  
Who was who, what was what, from Homer's  
tongue,  
And there an end of learning. Had you asked 50  
The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,

## DEVELOPMENT

“Who was it wrote the Iliad?”—what a laugh!  
“Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life  
Doubtless some facts exist: it’s everywhere:  
We have not settled, though, his place of birth: 55  
He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:  
Seven cities claimed him—Scio, with best right,  
Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns  
we have.

Then there’s the ‘Battle of the Frogs and  
Mice,’

That’s all—unless they dig ‘Margites’ up 60  
(I’d like that) nothing more remains to know.”

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;  
Until—“What’s this the Germans say is fact  
That Wolf found out first? It’s unpleasant work  
Their chop and change, unsettling one’s belief: 65  
All the same, while we live, we learn, that’s  
sure.”

So, I bent brow o’er *Prolegomena*.  
And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like  
Proved there was never any Troy at all,  
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged,—nay, worse,— 70  
No actual Homer, no authentic text,  
No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,  
Had treasured in my heart and soul so long—  
Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,  
Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts 75  
And soul of souls, fact’s essence freed and fixed  
From accidental fancy’s guardian sheath.  
Assuredly thenceforward—thank my stars!—  
However it got there, deprive who could—  
Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry, 80  
Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,  
Achilles and his Friend?—though Wolf—ah, Wolf!  
Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

But then "No dream 's worth waking"—Brown-  
ing says :

And here 's the reason why I tell thus much. 85  
I, now mature man, you anticipate,  
May blame my Father justifiably  
For letting me dream out my nonage thus,  
And only by such slow and sure degrees  
Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff, 90  
Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.  
Why did he ever let me dream at all,  
Not bid me taste the story in its strength ?  
Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified  
To rightly understand mythology, 95  
Silence at least was in his power to keep :  
I might have—somehow—correspondingly—  
Well, who knows by what method, gained my  
gains,  
Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,  
My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus' son, 100  
A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,  
Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.  
Could not I have excogitated this  
Without believing such men really were ?  
That is—he might have put into my hand 105  
The "Ethics" ? In translation, if you please,  
Exact, no pretty lying that improves,  
To suit the modern taste : no more, no less—  
The "Ethics" : 't is a treatise I find hard  
To read aright now that my hair is grey, 110  
And I can manage the original.  
At five years old—how ill had fared its leaves !  
Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,  
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,  
Nor crumple, dogsear and deface—boys' way. 115



## REPHAN<sup>1</sup>

How I lived, ere my human life began  
In this world of yours,—like you, made man,—  
When my home was the Star of my God Rephan?

Come then around me, close about,  
World-weary earth-born ones! Darkest doubt      5  
Or deepest despondency keeps you out?

Nowise! Before a word I speak,  
Let my circle embrace your worn, your weak,  
Brow-furrowed old age, youth's hollow cheek—

Diseased in the body, sick in soul,      10  
Pinched poverty, satiate wealth,—your whole  
Array of despairs! Have I read the roll?

All here? Attend, perpend! O Star  
Of my God Rephan, what wonders are  
In thy brilliance fugitive, faint and far!      15

Far from me, native to thy realm,  
Who shared its perfections which o'erwhelm  
Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm,

Let drive the sail, dare unconfined  
Embark for the vastitude, O Mind,      20  
Of an absolute bliss! Leave earth behind!

<sup>1</sup> Suggested by a very early recollection of a prose story by the noble woman and imaginative writer, Jane Taylor, of Ongar.

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Here, by extremes, at a mean you guess :  
There, all 's at most—not more, not less :  
Nowhere deficiency nor excess.

No want—whatever should be, is now : 25  
No growth—that 's change, and change comes—  
    how  
To royalty born with crown on brow ?

Nothing begins—so needs to end :  
Where fell it short at first ? Extend  
Only the same, no change can mend ! 30

I use your language : mine—no word  
Of its wealth would help who spoke, who heard,  
To a gleam of intelligence. None preferred,

None felt distaste when better and worse  
Were uncontrastable : bless or curse 35  
What—in that uniform universe ?

Can your world's phrase, your sense of things  
Forth-figure the Star of my God ? No springs,  
No winters throughout its space. Time brings

No hope, no fear : as to-day, shall be 40  
To-morrow : advance or retreat need we  
At our stand-still through eternity ?

All happy : needs must we so have been,  
Since who could be otherwise ? All serene :  
What dark was to banish, what light to screen ? 45

Earth's rose is a bud that 's checked or grows  
As beams may encourage or blasts oppose :  
Our lives leapt forth, each a full-orbed rose—

## REPHAN

Each rose sole rose in a sphere that spread  
Above and below and around—rose-red : 50  
No fellowship, each for itself instead.

One better than I—would prove I lacked  
Somewhat : one worse were a jarring fact  
Disturbing my faultlessly exact.

How did it come to pass there lurked 55  
Somehow a seed of change that worked  
Obscure in my heart till perfection irked ?—

Till out of its peace at length grew strife—  
Hopes, fears, loves, hates,—obscurely rife,—  
My life grown a-tremble to turn your life ? 60

Was it Thou, above all lights that are,  
Prime Potency, did Thy hand unbar  
The prison-gate of Rephan my Star ?

In me did such potency wake a pulse  
Could trouble tranquillity that lulls 65  
Not lashes inertion till throes convulse

Soul's quietude into discontent ?  
As when the completed rose bursts, rent  
By ardors till forth from its orb are sent

New petals that mar—unmake the disc— 70  
Spoil rondure : what in it ran brave risk,  
Changed apathy's calm to strife, bright, brisk,

Pushed simple to compound, sprang and spread  
Till, fresh-formed, faceted, floretted,  
The flower that slept woke a star instead ? 75

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

No mimic of Star Rephan ! How long  
I stagnated there where weak and strong,  
The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,

Are merged alike in a neutral Best,  
Can I tell ? No more than at whose behest 80  
The passion arose in my passive breast,

And I yearned for no sameness but difference  
In thing and thing, that should shock my sense  
With a want of worth in them all, and thence

Startle me up, by an Infinite 85  
Discovered above and below me—height  
And depth alike to attract my flight,

Repel my descent : by hate taught love.  
Oh, gain were indeed to see above  
Supremacy ever—to move, remove, 90

Not reach—aspire yet never attain  
To the object aimed at ! Scarce in vain,—  
As each stage I left nor touched again.

To suffer, did pangs bring the loved one bliss,  
Wring knowledge from ignorance,—just for this— 95  
To add one drop to a love-abyss !

Enough : for you doubt, you hope, O men,  
You fear, you agonize, die : what then ?  
Is an end to your life's work out of ken ?

Have you no assurance that, earth at end, 100  
Wrong will prove right ? Who made shall mend  
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend ?

## REPHAN

Why should I speak? You divine the test.  
When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast  
A voice said "So wouldst thou strive, not rest?" 105

"Burn and not smoulder, win by worth,  
Not rest content with a wealth that's dearth?  
Thou art past Rephan, thy place be Earth!"

## REVERIE

I KNOW there shall dawn a day  
—Is it here on homely earth?  
Is it yonder, worlds away,  
Where the strange and new have birth,  
That Power comes full in play? 5

Is it here, with grass about,  
Under befriending trees,  
When shy buds venture out,  
And the air by mild degrees  
Puts winter's death past doubt? 10

Is it up amid whirl and roar  
Of the elemental flame  
Which star-flecks heaven's dark floor,  
That, new yet still the same,  
Full in play comes Power once more? 15

Somewhere, below, above,  
Shall a day dawn—this I know—  
When Power, which vainly strove  
My weakness to o'erthrow,  
Shall triumph. I breathe, I move, 20

I truly am, at last!  
For a veil is rent between  
Me and the truth which passed  
Fitful, half-guessed, half-seen,  
Grasped at—not gained, held fast. 25

## REVERIE

I for my race and me  
    Shall apprehend life's law :  
In the legend of man shall see  
    Writ large what small I saw  
In my life's tale : both agree. 30

As the record from youth to age  
    Of my own, the single soul—  
So the world's wide book : one page  
    Deciphered explains the whole  
Of our common heritage. 35

How but from near to far  
    Should knowledge proceed, increase ?  
Try the clod ere test the star !  
    Bring our inside strife to peace  
Ere we wage, on the outside, war ! 40

So, my annals thus begin :  
    With body, to life awoke  
Soul, the immortal twin  
    Of body which bore soul's yoke  
Since mortal and not akin. 45

By means of the flesh, grown fit,  
    Mind, in surview of things,  
Now soared, anon alit  
    To treasure its gatherings  
From the ranged expanse—to-wit, 50

Nature,—earth's, heaven's wide show  
    Which taught all hope, all fear :  
Acquainted with joy and woe,  
    I could say " Thus much is clear,  
Doubt annulled thus much : I know. 55

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

“ All is effect of cause :

As it would, has willed and done  
Power : and my mind's applause  
Goes, passing laws each one,  
To Omnipotence, lord of laws.”

60

Head praises, but heart refrains  
From loving's acknowledgment.  
Whole losses outweigh half-gains :  
Earth's good is with evil blent :  
Good struggles but evil reigns.

65

Yet since Earth's good proved good—  
Incontrovertibly  
Worth loving—I understood  
How evil—did mind descry  
Power's object to end pursued—

70

Were haply as cloud across  
Good's orb, no orb itself :  
Mere mind—were it found at loss  
Did it play the tricky elf  
And from life's gold purge the dross ?

75

Power is known infinite :  
Good struggles to be—at best  
Seems—scanned by the human sight,  
Tried by the senses' test—  
Good palpably : but with right

80

Therefore to mind's award  
Of loving, as power claims praise ?  
Power—which finds nought too hard,  
Fulfilling itself all ways  
Unchecked, unchanged : while barred,

85



## REVERIE

Baffled, what good began  
Ends evil on every side.  
To Power submissive man  
Breathes "E'en as Thou art, abide!"  
While to Good "Late-found, long-sought," 90

"Would Power to a plenitude  
But liberate, but enlarge  
Good's strait confine,—renewed  
Were ever the heart's discharge  
Of loving!" Else doubts intrude. 95

For you dominate, stars all!  
For a sense informs you—brute,  
Bird, worm, fly, great and small,  
Each with your attribute  
Or low or majestic! 100

Thou earth that embosomest  
Offspring of land and sea—  
How thy hills first sank to rest,  
How thy vales bred herb and tree  
Which dizen thy mother-breast— 105

Do I ask? "Be ignorant  
Ever!" the answer clangs:  
Whereas if I plead world's want,  
Soul's sorrows and body's pangs,  
Play the human applicant,— 110

Is a remedy far to seek?  
I question and find response:  
I—all men, strong or weak,  
Conceive and declare at once  
For each want its cure. "Power, speak!" 115

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

“Stop change, avert decay,  
Fix life fast, banish death,  
Eclipse from the star bid stay,  
Abridge of no moment's breath  
One creature! Hence, Night, hail, Day!” 120

What need to confess again  
No problem this to solve  
By impotence? Power, once plain  
Proved Power,—let on Power devolve  
Good's right to co-equal reign! 125

Past mind's conception—Power!  
Do I seek how star, earth, beast,  
Bird, worm, fly, gained their dower  
For life's use, most and least?  
Back from the search I cower. 130

Do I seek what heals all harm,  
Nay, hinders the harm at first,  
Saves earth? Speak, Power, the charm!  
Keep the life there unamerced  
By chance, change, death's alarm! 135

As promptly as mind conceives,  
Let Power in its turn declare  
Some law which wrong retrieves,  
Abolishes everywhere  
What thwarts, what irks, what grieves! 140

Never to be! and yet  
How easy it seems—to sense  
Like man's—if somehow met  
Power with its match—immense  
Love, limitless, unbeset 145

## REVERIE

By hindrance on every side !  
Conjectured, nowise known,  
Such may be : could man confide  
Such would match—were Love but shown  
Stript of the veils that hide— 150

Power's self now manifest !  
So reads my record : thine,  
O world, how runs it ? Guessed  
Were the purport of that prime line,  
Prophetic of all the rest ! 155

“ In a beginning God  
Made heaven and earth.” Forth flashed  
Knowledge : from star to clod  
Man knew things : doubt abashed  
Closed its long period. 160

Knowledge obtained Power praise.  
Had Good been manifest,  
Broke out in cloudless blaze,  
Unchequered as unrepressed,  
In all things Good at best— 165

Then praise—all praise, no blame—  
Had hailed the perfection. No !  
As Power's display, the same  
Be Good's—praise forth shall flow  
Unisonous in acclaim ! 170

Even as the world its life,  
So have I lived my own—  
Power seen with Love at strife,  
That sure, this dimly shown,  
—Good rare and evil rife. 175

## ASOLANDO : FANCIES AND FACTS

Whereof the effect be—faith  
That, some far day, were found  
Ripeness in things now rathe,  
Wrong righted, each chain unbound,  
Renewal born out of scathe. 180

Why faith—but to lift the load,  
To leaven the lump, where lies  
Mind prostrate through knowledge owed  
To the loveless Power it tries  
To withstand, how vain ! In flowed 185

Ever resistless fact :  
No more than the passive clay  
Disputes the potter's act,  
Could the whelmed mind disobey  
Knowledge the cataract. 190

But, perfect in every part,  
Has the potter's moulded shape,  
Leap of man's quickened heart,  
Throe of his thought's escape,  
Stings of his soul which dart 195

Through the barrier of flesh, till keen  
She climbs from the calm and clear,  
Through turbidity all between,  
From the known to the unknown here,  
Heaven's "Shall be," from Earth's "Has  
been" ? 200

Then life is—to wake not sleep,  
Rise and not rest, but press  
From earth's level where blindly creep  
Things perfected, more or less,  
To the heaven's height, far and steep, 205

## REVERIE

Where, amid what strifes and storms  
May wait the adventurous quest,  
Power is Love—transports, transforms  
Who aspired from worst to best,  
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'. 210

I have faith such end shall be :  
From the first, Power was—I knew.  
Life has made clear to me  
That, strive but for closer view,  
Love were as plain to see. 215

When see ? When there dawns a day,  
If not on the homely earth,  
Then yonder, worlds away,  
Where the strange and new have birth,  
And Power comes full in play. 220

## EPILOGUE

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,  
When you set your fancies free,  
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think,  
imprisoned—  
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you  
loved so,  
—Pity me ?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken !  
What had I on earth to do  
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly ?  
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel  
—Being—who ?

One who never turned his back but marched  
breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,  
wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time  
Greet the unseen with a cheer !  
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should  
be,  
“ Strive and thrive ! ” cry “ Speed,—fight on, fare  
ever  
There as here ! ”

# A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

## OF

### ROBERT BROWNING'S POEMS AND PLAYS

1833. PAULINE : A Fragment of a Confession.
1835. PARACELsus. Including the Songs—  
     I hear a voice, perchance I heard.  
     Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes.  
     Over the sea our galleys went.  
     Thus the Mayne glideth.
1837. STRAFFORD : An Historical Tragedy.
1840. SORDELLO.
1841. Bells and Pomegranates, No. I., PIPPA PASSES. In-  
     cluding the Songs—  
     All service ranks the same with God.  
     The year 's at the Spring.  
     I am a painter who cannot paint.  
     Give her but a least excuse to love me !  
     A king lived long ago.<sup>1</sup>  
     You'll love me yet !—and I can tarry.  
     Overhead the tree-tops meet.
1842. Bells and Pomegranates No. II., KING VICTOR AND  
     KING CHARLES.
1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. III., DRAMATIC LYRICS.  
     Cavalier Tunes—  
         I. Marching Along.  
         II. Give a Rouse.  
         III. My Wife Gertrude.<sup>2</sup>  
     Italy and France—  
         I. Italy.<sup>3</sup>  
         II. France.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version appeared in *The Monthly Repository*, 1835.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards called "Boot and Saddle."

<sup>3</sup> Afterwards called "My Last Duchess."

<sup>4</sup> Afterwards called "Count Gismond."

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. III. (*continued*)—  
 Camp and Cloister—  
     I. Camp (French).<sup>1</sup>  
     II. Cloister (Spanish).<sup>2</sup>  
 In a Gondola.  
 Artemis Prologuizes.<sup>3</sup>  
 Waring.  
 Queen Worship—  
     I. Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli.  
     II. Cristina.  
 Madhouse Cells—  
     I. [Johannes Agricola].<sup>4</sup>  
     II. [Porphyria].<sup>5</sup>  
 Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr, 1842.  
 The Pied Piper of Hamelin.
1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. IV., THE RETURN OF  
 THE DRUSES: A Tragedy in Five Acts.<sup>6</sup>
1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. V., A BLOT IN THE  
 'SCUTCHEON: A Tragedy in Three Acts. Including  
 the Song—  
     There 's a woman like a dew-drop.
1844. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VI., COLOMBE'S BIRTH-  
 DAY: A Play in Five Acts.
1845. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VII., DRAMATIC ROMANCES  
 AND LYRICS—  
     How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix.  
     Pictor Ignotus. Florence, 15—.  
     Italy in England.<sup>7</sup>  
     England in Italy.<sup>8</sup>  
     The Lost Leader.  
     The Lost Mistress.

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards called "Incident of the French Camp."

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards called "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister."

<sup>3</sup> Afterwards transferred to "Men and Women" with the spelling "Prologizes."

<sup>4</sup> Afterwards called "Johannes Agricola in Meditation"; was first printed in *The Monthly Repository*, vol. x. N.S. 1836, pp. 45, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Afterwards called "Porphyria's Lover"; was first printed in *The Monthly Repository*, vol. x. N.S. 1836, pp. 43, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Originally advertised under the title "Mansoor the Hierophant."

<sup>7</sup> Afterwards called "The Italian in England."

<sup>8</sup> Afterwards called "The Englishman in Italy."



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1845. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VII. (*continued*)—  
Home Thoughts from Abroad.

I. "Oh to be in England."

II. "Here 's to Nelson's Memory."<sup>1</sup>

III. "Nobly Cape St. Vincent."<sup>2</sup>

The Tomb at St. Praxed's.<sup>3</sup>

Garden Fancies—

I. The Flower's Name.<sup>4</sup>

II. Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis.<sup>5</sup>

France and Spain—

I. The Laboratory (Ancien Régime).<sup>6</sup>

II. The Confessional.

The Flight of the Duchess.<sup>7</sup>

Earth's Immortalities.

Song, "Nay but you, who do not love her."

The Boy and the Angel.<sup>8</sup>

Night and Morning (I. Night,<sup>9</sup> II. Morning<sup>10</sup>).

Claret and Tokay.<sup>11</sup>

Saul.<sup>12</sup>

Time's Revenges.

The Glove.

1846. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VIII. and last. LURIA  
and A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

1850. CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

1855. MEN AND WOMEN. In Two Volumes—

Vol. I. Love among the Ruins.

A Lovers' Quarrel.

Evelyn Hope.

Up at a Villa—Down in the City. (As distinguished  
by an Italian Person of Quality.)

<sup>1</sup> First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. i, June 1844, p. 525; afterwards as the third section of "Nationality in Drinks."

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards called "Home Thoughts from the Sea."

<sup>3</sup> Afterwards called "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," was first printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. iii. March 1845, pp. 237-239.

<sup>4, 5</sup> First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. ii. July 1844, pp. 45-48.

<sup>6</sup> First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. i. June 1844, pp. 513, 514.

<sup>7</sup> Sections 1 to 9, first printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. iii. April 1845, pp. 313-318.

<sup>8</sup> First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. ii. August 1844, pp. 140-142.

<sup>9</sup> Afterwards called "Meeting at Night."

<sup>10</sup> Afterwards called "Parting at Morning."

<sup>11</sup> First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. i, June 1844, p. 525; afterwards as the first and second sections of "Nationality in Drinks."

<sup>12</sup> First part only (sections 1-9); the second part was added and included with it in *Men and Women*, 1855, vol. ii. p. 111.

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1855. MEN AND WOMEN. Vol. I. (*continued*)—

A Woman's Last Word.  
Fra Lippo Lippi.  
A Toccata of Galuppi's.  
By the Fireside.  
Any Wife to Any Husband.  
An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience  
of Karshish, the Arab Physician.  
Mesmerism.  
A Serenade at the Villa.  
My Star.  
Instans Tyrannus.  
A Pretty Woman.  
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."  
Respectability.  
A Light Woman.  
The Statue and the Bust.<sup>1</sup>  
Love in a Life.  
Life in a Love.  
How it strikes a Contemporary.  
The Last Ride Together.  
The Patriot: An Old Story.  
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.  
Bishop Blougram's Apology.  
Memorabilia.

Vol. II. Andrea del Sarto (called "The Faultless Painter").

Before.  
After.  
In Three Days.  
In a Year.  
Old Pictures in Florence.  
In a Balcony.  
Saul. (See *note* 12, p. 371.)  
"De Gustibus —"  
Women and Roses.  
Protus.  
Holy-Cross Day.  
The Guardian Angel: A Picture at Fano.  
Cleon.<sup>2</sup>  
The Twins.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Also printed in pamphlet form in 1855.

<sup>2</sup> Also printed in pamphlet form in 1855.

<sup>3</sup> First printed in a pamphlet entitled "Two Poems. By Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning." 8vo. London, 1854.

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### 1855. MEN AND WOMEN. Vol. II. (*continued*)—

Popularity.  
 The Heretic's Tragedy : A Middle-Age Interlude.  
 Two in the Campagna.  
 A Grammarian's Funeral.  
 One Way of Love.  
 Another Way of Love.  
 " Transcendentalism " : A Poem in Twelve Books.  
 Misconceptions.  
 One Word More. To E. B. B.

### 1864. DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—

James Lee.<sup>1</sup>  
 Gold Hair : A Legend of Pornic.<sup>2</sup>  
 The Worst of It.  
 Dîs aliter visum ; or Le Byron de nos Jours.  
 Too Late.  
 Abt Vogler.  
 Rabbi Ben Ezra.  
 A Death in the Desert.  
 Caliban upon Setebos ; or, Natural Theology in the  
 Island.  
 Confessions.  
 May and Death.<sup>3</sup>  
 Prospice.<sup>4</sup>  
 Youth and Art.  
 A Face.  
 A Likeness.  
 Mr. Sludge, " The Medium."  
 Apparent Failure.  
 Epilogue.

1864. Orpheus and Eurydice. F. Leighton.<sup>5</sup>

1868. Deaf and Dumb.<sup>6</sup>

1868-9. THE RING AND THE BOOK. In Four Volumes.

1871. BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE, including a Transcript  
 from Euripides.

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards entitled " James Lee's Wife."

<sup>2</sup> First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xiii. May 1864, p. 596, and in pamphlet form at the same date (Clowes).

<sup>3</sup> First printed in *The Keepsake* for 1857.

<sup>4</sup> First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xiii. June 1864, p. 694.

<sup>5</sup> First printed in the Catalogue of the Royal Academy Exhibition 1864, afterwards called " Eurydice to Orpheus."

<sup>6</sup> First printed in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, six vols. 1868 ; vol. vi. p. 151.

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

- 1 First printed in *The Cornhill Magazine*, March 1871.  
2. 3 Published together in one volume.

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

### 1880. DRAMATIC IDYLS : SECOND SERIES—

[Prologue.]  
Echetlos.  
Clive.  
Muléykeh.  
Pietro of Abano.  
Doctor ———.  
Pan and Luna.  
[Epilogue.]

### 1883. JOCOSERIA—

Wanting is—What ?  
Donald.  
Solomon and Balkis.  
Cristina and Monaldeschi.  
Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli—  
Adam, Lilith, and Eve.  
Ixion.  
Jochanan Hakkadosh.  
Never the Time and the Place.  
Pambo.

### 1884. FERISHTAH'S FANCIES—

Prologue.  
1. The Eagle.  
2. Melon-Seller.  
3. Shah Abbas.  
4. The Family.  
5. The Sun.  
6. Mihrab Shah.  
7. A Camel-Driver.  
8. Two Camels.  
9. Cherries.  
10. Plot-Culture.  
11. A Pillar at Sebzevah.<sup>1</sup>  
12. A Bean-Stripe : also Apple-Eating.  
Epilogue.

### 1887. PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY. To wit : Bernard de Mandeville, Daniel Bartoli, Christopher Smart, George Bubb Dodington, Francis Furini, Gerard de Lairese, and Charles Avison. Introduced by a Dialogue between Apollo and the Fates ; concluded by another between John Fust and his Friends.

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards reprinted with the spelling "Sebzevar."

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

### 1889. ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS—<sup>1</sup>

Prologue.  
 Rosny.  
 Dubiety.  
 Now.  
 Humility.  
 Poetics.  
 Summum Bonum.  
 A Pearl, A Girl.  
 Speculative.  
 White Witchcraft.  
 Bad Dreams. I.  
       "      "      II.  
       "      "      III.  
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 Inapprehensiveness.  
 Which?  
 The Cardinal and the Dog.  
 The Pope and the Net.  
 The Bean-Feast.  
 Muckle-Mouth Meg.  
 Arcades Ambo.  
 The Lady and the Painter.  
 Ponte dell' Angelo, Venice.  
 Beatrice Signorini.  
 Flute-Music, with an Accompaniment.  
 "Imperante Augusto natus est——"  
 Development.  
 Rephan.  
 Reverie.  
 Epilogue.

### 1912. CENTENARY EDITION (in 10 Volumes). Vol. III.—

Luria—A Soul's Tragedy—Dramatic Lyrics—Dramatic Romances.

Under the title "Additional Poems" the following appear for the first time in a collected edition:—

Sonnet—Eyes Calm beside Thee.<sup>2</sup>

A Forest Thought.<sup>3</sup>

Ben Karshook's Wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Published on December 12, 1889, the day of Mr. Browning's death.

<sup>2</sup> First printed in *The Monthly Repository*, October 1834; reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers, Part XII., Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 469, and in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life of Browning*, 1910, p. 306.

<sup>3</sup> First printed in *Country Life*, June 10, 1905; reprinted in *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett*, 1906, and in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life*, 1910, p. 305.

<sup>4</sup> First printed in *The Keepsake*, 1856, and frequently reprinted.

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

1912. CENTENARY EDITION (in 10 Volumes). Vol. IX.—  
Pacchiarotto and how he worked in Distemper. With  
other Poems—La Saisiaz—The Two Poets of Croisic  
—Dramatic Idyls.

Under the title "Additional Poems," the following appear  
for the first time in a collected edition:—

"Oh, Love, Love!"<sup>1</sup>

Verses from "The Hour will come."<sup>2</sup>

Goldoni.<sup>3</sup>

Helen's Tower.<sup>4</sup>

The Founder of the Feast (to Arthur Chappell).<sup>5</sup>

The Names (to Shakespeare).<sup>6</sup>

Why I am a Liberal.<sup>7</sup>

These seven poems have been reprinted in the  
Browning Society's Papers and in Nicoll and Wise's  
"Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century"  
Vol. I. (1895).

<sup>1</sup> First printed in J. P. Mahaffy's *Euripides*, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> From the German of Wilhelmine von Hillern; first printed in Miss Clara  
Bell's English Edition, 1879.

<sup>3</sup> First printed in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 8, 1883.

<sup>4</sup> First printed in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 28, 1883.

<sup>5</sup> First printed in *The World*, April 16, 1884.

<sup>6</sup> First appeared in the Shakspearean Show Book (Albert Hall), May 1884;  
reprinted in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, May 29, 1884.

<sup>7</sup> First printed in Andrew Reid's *Why I am a Liberal* (Cassell), 1885.





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THE END





## A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

A minute since—defies thy longing looks,  
Withdrawn into the unknowable once more.  
Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust  
As wholly love allied to ignorance ! 65  
There lies thy truth and safety. Love is praise,  
And praise is love ! Refine the same, contrive  
An intellectual tribute—ignorance  
Appreciating ere approbative  
Of knowledge that is infinite ? With us 70  
The small, who use the knowledge of our kind  
Greater than we, more wisely ignorance  
Restricts its apprehension, sees and knows  
No more than brain accepts in faith of sight,  
Takes first what comes first, only sure so far. 75  
By Sebzevar a certain pillar stands  
So aptly that its gnomon tells the hour ;  
What if the townsmen said ‘ Before we thank  
Who placed it, for his serviceable craft,  
And go to dinner since its shade tells noon, 80  
Needs must we have the craftsman’s purpose clear  
On half a hundred more recondite points  
Than a mere summons to a vulgar meal ! ’  
Better they say ‘ How opportune the help !  
Be loved and praised, thou kindly-hearted sage 85  
Whom Hudhud taught,—the gracious spirit-  
bird,—  
How to construct the pillar, teach the time ! ’  
So let us say—not ‘ Since we know, we love,’  
But rather ‘ Since we love, we know enough.’  
Perhaps the pillar by a spell controlled 90  
Mushtari in his courses ? Added grace  
Surely I count it that the sage devised,  
Beside celestial service, ministry  
To all the land, by one sharp shade at noon  
Falling as folk foresee. Once more then, Friend— 95  
(What ever in those careless ears of thine